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# The rememory of black oppression: forging a Rasta identity with specific reference to the township of Daveyton, 1994 to the present

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# THE REMEMORY OF BLACK OPPRESSION: FORGING A RASTA IDENTITY WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO THE TOWNSHIP OF DAVEYTON, 1994 TO THE PRESENT.

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

**Johannesburg, 2008**

## ABSTRACT

The black township of Daveyton, on the East Rand, was established in 1955. Like residents of other townships on the Rand, its residents found themselves faced with social, economic and political problems, even after the liberation in 1994. The emergence, acceptance and spread of Rastafarianism as a way of life was in direct reaction to these problems. Rastafarianism originated in the Caribbean island of Jamaica as a direct reaction to slavery. Its emergence in Africa was in reaction to colonialism, while in South Africa it was due to colonialism and apartheid. In Daveyton, the organisation came into being in 1997 and was formalised in 2002. The reason for the formalisation of the Movement after 1994 was to present a united force against the government and society who seemed reluctant to recognise the Rastafarian freedom of worship. Accordingly, Rastafarianism is millennial in nature given the reasons for its emergence.

Instead of choosing to suppress their experience of oppression and suffering, Rastafarians have chosen to incorporate these experiences and make them part of their worldview. These memories of oppression become evident in the way they have chosen to express them namely by forging their group identity. This is reflected in the nature of their organisation, belief systems and practice that differ from other organisations. This unique identity makes Rastafarianism unpopular with the government, some religious movements and some members of the community. However, in spite of this unpopularity, the Movement is becoming more acceptable owing to its dynamic nature and concern with contemporary problems facing society. This is shown by a change in the way the Movement is perceived by some members of society. In addition, more people have accepted their lifestyle. Therefore, Rastafarians have managed to shape a separate identity and a culture based on past and present experiences.

The research methodology followed in gathering information for this study is the integration of secondary sources and written primary sources with oral history and participant observation. However, the bulk of information was gathered through participant observation.

## Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg.
It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

**Midas Harold Chawane**

**Place_____Date_____**

## Dedication

To my late brother George Rawley Marolen

With lots of memories

## Acknowledgement

I would like to thank everyone who assisted me in various ways during the period of my study.

A special word of gratitude goes to my mentor Professor Cynthia Kros for her encouragement and guidance. If it was not for her patience and support, this study could not have materialised.

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# Glossary

*Babylon* —Rastafarians distinguish between what they call *Babylon* and Zion. The word refers to bad things, people or oppressors.

*Babylon sticks* — cigarettes

*Bun* — burn as for fire.

*Chanting Down Babylon* — fighting evil or oppression.

*Churchical (chants)* — songs that are sung during congregation.

*Downpression* or oppression the attempt of wider society to impose its values on Rastafari - said values being in direct contradiction to the word and will of *Jah* or *Jah* people.

*Earthday* — birthday.

*Elders* —The term given to individuals of long standing commitment in the Rasta Movement. In everyday speech, the status of male individuals as elders is often acknowledged by the use of the term "Bongo" as honorific.

*Flash* — meat.

*Ganja* — dagga or marijuana.

*Grounation* (*groundation*) — the entire process of congregation or meeting.

*House* – church or a branch.

*Imanity* — humanity.

*Iration* — creation.

*Iry talk* — Rastafarian language.

*Iseness* — business.

*Ises* — for praises also referring to *churchical session.*

*Issemble* — *assemble* which means the gathering *Jah* children.

*I-tal livity* — refers to living in a simple, pure and organic way in harmony with the natural environment, which is exemplified in their physical appearance, commitment to the *yard,* use of herbs, process of reflection, and artistic forms.

*Ithiopia* — as an antithesis of Babylon, *Ithiopia* represents the transcendence of a negative self-image, racism, religious hegemony and economic and political domination. It (*Ithiopia*), therefore, pertains to a transformative vision of dignity, religious communion, equal rights and justice.

*Nyahbinghi* — a way of life based on Old Testament practices which covers nutritional practices, personal presentation and dress code. It is also a chant meaning death to black and white *downpressors*. It can also mean when Rastafarians come together to drum and chant.

*Nyam* (*flash)* — eat (meat).

*Order/House* — a sect or denomination or a branch of the same sect.

*Reasoning* — is the democratic process of verbal engagement on philosophical matters in order to reach a conclusion on a specific matter.

*Zion or Ethiopia* — is the Biblical name for Africa. It refers broadly to Africa and more especially to Ethiopia as the ancestral homeland of all black peoples. The symbols of Rastafari culture identify with this domain in its various spiritual, cultural and political connotations. It is both the place of salvation and the promise land, heaven.

# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

This focus of this study is the origin and development of Rastafarianism in the Township of Daveyton from 1994 to the present. Daveyton is situated on the East Rand side of the town of Benoni that was established in 1955. Like the townships of Meadowlands and Diepkloof that came into existence because of the forced removal of blacks from Newclare, Martindale, Sophiatown and Pageview, Daveyton was inhabited by people who were removed from an informal settlement at the Apex Industrial area in Benoni.

Despite the National Party (NP) government's attempt, for various reasons discussed later, to make Daveyton more habitable than other contemporary townships, the social, political and economic conditions in many areas of the township were still far from desirable in the eyes of its residents. On this basis, the link between the general conditions and the subsequent development of Rastafarianism are explored. In addition, an important aspect of the study is to establish the extent to which the Rastafarian movement is a response to impoverishment of the environment.

The study of Rastafarianism calls for other factors that should be taken into account. Rastafarianism is an established and growing phenomenon in most South African townships, especially after 1994 when hopes for its recognition and acceptance by the new government and society became high. The Rastafarian movement has come to enjoy attention from the media, mainly for its more sensationalist aspects. An uncertain question that requires an answer in this connection is, to what extent does the media advance the Rastafarian cause? From 1994, radio stations (of the South African Broadcasting Corporation)

started to feature programmes that not only played reggae music but also explained to the listeners the establishment of Rastafarianism. Examples include: Radio Thobela FM (broadcasting in Sepedi) hosting Lesiba "Ronaldo" Maubane between 14h05 and 15h00 on Saturdays; Radio 2000 presented Roots Reggae every Sunday between 13h00 and 15h00 hosted by Bongani Radebe; Phala Phala FM (broadcasting in TshiVenda) had a reggae slot on Saturdays between 06h00 and 10h00 presented by Tshianeo; Munghanalonene FM presented every Saturday between 19h00 to 20h00 hosted by James.[1] During some of these programmes, reggae music was played, but also prominent Rastafarians were interviewed. In addition, listeners could phone in to either comment on the programme or the Movement. The latter point is new and does mark a change, for prior to 1994 African radio stations only played reggae music without talking about the Movement itself. Today, Rastafarians take part in television talk shows in which they discuss their beliefs.[2] Unlike the period before 1994, newspapers and magazines are becoming more interested in publishing stories on Rastafarian issues such as dreadlocks and *ganja*.[3] The year 1994 is thus a transitional point for the Movement.

For Daveyton, I have gathered oral evidence to suggest that the Movement has been growing since 1994 and continue to attract new members (mainly the youths) as well as other people who are Rastafarians but who did not belong to any formal organisation prior to 1994. The importance of organised Rastafarianism at a national level is the role they played in the establishment of Rastafarian "churches" or *houses* on the East Rand. For example, new *houses* such as those found in Germiston/Primrose, Thembisa, Kwa-Thema/Springs and

[1] Radio Motsweding also used to hosts a Rastafarian programme every Saturday afternoon before its presenter was suspended.

[2] These are usually those television programmes that debate the question of whether *ganja* should be legalised or not and whether Rastafarianism should be recognised by the government as a religious movement or not. Television programmes such as *3 Talk* hosted by SABC 3 sometimes feature Rastafarians explaining their movement. Viewers phone and ask questions concerning the movement.

[3] Civil society is also reminded of the existence of Rastafarianism during September, the Black History Month that has come to be associated with it. During this month some magazines such as *Design Indaba Magazine* publishes an article on Rastafarianism. Newspapers and magazines continue to write stories on Rastafarianism during visits by Reggae singers from Jamaica or when there was court hearing on *ganja* such as that of Prince Gareth as we shall later see.

Wattville/Benoni emerged after 1994. This is evidence that the Movement was becoming popular in Daveyton as well as in other townships not discussed in this thesis. For example, the Movement was introduced by two members with only one *house* which broke up into two new *houses.* This study seeks to establish the reasons and the extent of the appeal of Rastafarianism in the post-apartheid period by examining its manifestations in Daveyton. It is hoped that exploration that is more general can be extrapolated where appropriate.

### 1.1.1 Rastafarianism

Although the study focuses on Daveyton, it is imperative to know the general origin of Rastafarianism in order to understand its manifestations in South Africa more broadly, and Daveyton in particular. As documented, the Rastafarian Movement originated in the Caribbean island of Jamaica in the 1930's. The Movement stems from the oppression and exploitation of black people in Jamaica and elsewhere. The main reason for its emergence in the 1930's was that Haile Selassie the Rastafarians' god was crowned king of Ethiopia. This coronation coincided with Marcus Garvey's prophesy when he told people to 'look to Africa when a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near'. From Jamaica, the Movement spread to other parts of the world where people felt oppressed and exploited and especially to those countries where there were people of African origin (Johnson-Hill, 1996:4). Although Rastafarianism started as a religious movement with a handful of supporters, it developed into a social, cultural and political movement that became more inclusive, attracting adherents from different ethnic groups and economic strata, as Johnson-Hill (1996) points out. The emergence and growth of the Rastafarian movement in the Caribbean was thus a direct result of slavery, which had attempted to destroy attempts by slaves to forge their own cultural identity. In the South African context and particularly in post-apartheid South Africa, there are factors that need to be highlighted that appear to have contributed to the emerging popularity of the Movement. These may be related to the process of creating either new or alternative forms identity construction.

Using secondary accounts of the origins of Rastafarianism, the thesis retraces its origins to Jamaica where it subsequently spread to South Africa. In addition, in this thesis, the extent of its acceptance in Daveyton is explored and evaluated. Since it originated as a religious movement, scholars such as Witvlei (1985) describes it as a 'liberation theology' or 'Black theology', but differentiates it from other religions; this marks it as unique.

This thesis touches on some theological principles, but is essentially a historical study. It is historical in the sense that it is located in a particular context, delimited in time, geographical space and is based on documentary as well as oral evidence. While not wishing to underplay the importance of the spiritual dimension, the thesis will limit the discussion to spiritual expressions and manifestations of the participants' experiences of particular material conditions and their perception of their life-choices. In addition, the thesis will evaluate Rastafarians' responses to the perceived failures of the post-apartheid regime and accompanying changes in order to understand the forces that shaped South Africa's social, economic and political history.

There is a substantial literature on the so-called millenarian movements. These tend to explain them through detailed reference to social inequalities, economic deprivation and political oppression, which are manifest in the religious messages. These messages, visions and metaphors are read for their socio-political commentary. Social historians such as Edgar (1977) and Peires (2003) have set precedents of this kind of approach in South Africa. In his work entitled *The Fifth Seal: Enoch Mgijima, The Israelites and the Bulhoek Massacre,* Edgar (1988) studies the 'Israelites' and the Bulhoek massacre of May 1921 in the Bulhoek location near Queenstown in the Eastern Cape. He situates the religious message and the government's response within a particular historical context. He argues that the 'Israelites' were resisting land dispossession (1913 Land Act) by camping illegally at Bulhoek under the leadership of their prophet.

Similarly, Peires' (2003) work may be located in the social history that was prevalent in certain parts of academia in the 1970's and 1980's. He sought to understand the Great Cattle Killing in terms of a materialist explanation. He describes and interprets Nongqawuse's vision and the various messages delivered by the ancestors, but his work is more focused on the history of land dispossession and loss of autonomy suffered by the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape over the course of the 19th century. He explains the divisions within Xhosa society and different responses to Nongqawuse's vision by looking at the route taken by lung sickness, which resulted into mass cattle killing. Those chiefdoms untouched by lung sickness were less likely to respond to the ancestors' call for cattle to be killed. In his book, *The Dead will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-1857,* Peires traces the origin of the cattle killing on the Eastern frontier to well before the 1850's. He maintains that, in order to understand the nature and cause of the cattle killing, it is important to return to the British occupation in 1806 and the subsequent 'total war' imposed on the Xhosa that had serious social, economic and political repercussions for many years afterwards. Peires examines the religious as well as the historical context of Nongqawuse's prophecy (arguing that the visions repeated Xhosa ancestral beliefs mixed with Christian beliefs related to the resurrection and the final judgement). He maintains that the vision became powerful in the context of the 'total war', extreme dispossession and racial segregation (as they were pushed back across the Fish River) suffered by the Xhosa. The visions seemed to explain their misfortune with reference to those who had been practising witchcraft, and to offer hope for a new order without whites as they were to be driven into the sea.

In this thesis, Rastafarianism in South Africa are studied within the political and social contexts with attention paid to questions about the impact of apartheid, land issues and political inequalities, especially in the Daveyton context. Observe that Rastafarianism in the South Africa context developed a unique South African identity (with respect to its rituals, social composition, structure and organisation, methods of recruitment, aims and attitude towards other religions and towards the wider society) whilst maintaining something of its original

identity (Jamaican), which this thesis will attempt to capture. Writings on Rastafarianism in South Africa tend to pay little attention to what are its uniquely South African features. Therefore, this study endeavours to establish what are uniquely South African varieties of Rastafarianism, how these adapt to the township environment, and the nature of the elements that they retain from mainstream Rastafarianism. This thesis also attempts to outline both the general and specific characteristics of the Movement in Daveyton. This is done with the aid of various authors writing about identities, cultures and subcultures. The question remains: How is Rastafarianism classified in terms of these concepts?

This thesis will explore reasons for the Movement's popularity in Daveyton Township. This popularity is evident by the number of students wearing dreadlocks as a fashion or as a manifestation of their religious beliefs. The existence of Rastafarians in schools has opened new topics of debate, which is a sign of its growth as well as influence on the community. The existence of Rastafarians and their fight for recognition in South Africa has become a controversial issue. Of interest is that Rastafarianism persists and is becoming even more popular in Daveyton despite the unwillingness (as perceived by Rastafarians) of the government to recognise it. The Movement has become even more resilient under the new government. Despite international recognition of Rastafarianism (by the United Nations Organisation and countries such as Britain), constitutional recognition (that is freedom of religion, belief and opinion as in Section15 (1) of the Constitution) (*The Jamaican Observer,* 24th November 1996), and the popularity that it enjoys amongst the youth, the Movement is faced with opposition in South Africa. This opposition arises from the government, some members of civil society, the police, the judicial system and other religious movements. This thesis will demonstrate that, in spite of the negativity and opposition it is facing, Rastafarianism is has a place in the South African religious, social, cultural and political spheres, a force not to be ignored.

This is a case study based on Daveyton, but it is envisaged that it may serve as a basis for other extended studies of the situation in South Africa. This thesis

explores the position of the Movement in the post 1994 period in South Africa; it shows how this Movement is both similar to and different from the one in Jamaica. Hence, Daveyton is a case study that explores these differences, arguing that there are Rastafarian conditions that are specific to South Africa.

According to Johnson-Hill (1996), the Rastafarian movement has grown in its number of adherents and is becoming one of the most popular youth movements internationally and in South Africa, especially after the first democratic election of 1994. Johnson-Hill maintains that since its origin in Jamaica, Rastafarianism has spread to urban centres throughout the Caribbean and Latin America, Europe, North America, Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand, and it has appeared in remote islands in the South Pacific. He argues:

> It has had a special appeal for black youth, especially Afro-Jamaicans and other youth of African descent who inhabit some of the world's poorest and most populous urban communities (Johnson-Hill, 1996: 3).

The text suggests the relationship between being poor and being black is the basis for accepting Rastafarianism. In the case of South Africa, its growth amongst the poor black urban youth, as elsewhere where it has spread through reggae music, is due to increased visits and performances by reggae musicians. South African youths respond, it is argued, because they have a lot in common with youth from other countries where Rastafarianism is a popular movement. These similarities include being from a poor background and inhabiting the most populous urban centres. In many countries such as Jamaica, the United States of America and Great Britain, the Movement has attracted much attention from scholars in the fields of cultural and social history, religious studies, social psychology, anthropology, politics and sociology. It is possible that the Movement enjoys recognition in these countries due to the availability of information to the public.
In the case of South African, little academic research has been undertaken on Rastafarianism. This partially explains why the Movement is often viewed negatively. There are three possible explanations for this situation. The first is that prior to 1994 the activities, cultural and religious beliefs, and way of life of Rastafarians were in conflict with the NP government's policies. Rastafarians

were therefore seen as subversive elements in the same way members of other organisations that fought apartheid were (*Interview, Bongane,* 20th April 2003). This made it impossible for them to organise themselves into formal groups that could be studied easily. The second reason is that Rastafarians tend not to allow strangers to interview or attend their gatherings.[4] Thirdly, despite the apartheid government's view, Rastafarians were not active during the struggle against apartheid because they believe in non-violence. Hence, the majority of people involved in the liberation struggle seem not to have taken cognisance of them.

Research undertaken in South Africa on this topic has been confined to the areas of the Western Cape and Natal, but no work has been done on Gauteng in general let alone Daveyton in particular. It is hoped that the study of Rastafarianism in the township of Daveyton may promote an understanding of general trends in the development of this Movement in South Africa.

### 1.1.2 Daveyton

The reason for the choice of the township of Daveyton as a focus of this case study is that although it shared features with other townships, it was notable for being a supposedly model township, proclaimed as such by members of the National Party government. The NP intended it to be a model township in terms of facilities and infrastructure. The NP's vision was that a model township would make a benevolent impact on its residents' behaviour. The fact that Daveyton can be seen as part of the government's instruments for social control ought to be seen against the background of promises made to the white electorate of controlling the influx of black people into urban areas. Ironically, as a model township, Daveyton attracted a significant number of people with particular consequences for its development, and for the ethnic divisions that were established as a hallmark of apartheid in the 1950's when it was legally constituted. Daveyton may provide an exemplary model for what Vail (1989) has said. Explaining the

[4]This is still the case even today (after 1994). Rastafarians are still suspicious of non-Rastafarians and they always feel that strangers come with evil intentions of gathering information on their activities and pass this to Babylon.

negative impact of ethnicity, he sees it as type of a 'false consciousness' since it is not a natural cultural residue but a consciously crafted ideological creation imposed by the government (Vail, 1981:5-7). Daveyton offers the researcher an opportunity to establish what relations exists (if any) between apartheid's created or imposed ethnicities, class formation and particular religious expressions. It is interesting to attempt to establish what residents made of these ethnicities later on, namely, how they perceived new identities that were formed in the process of their encounter with apartheid created ethnicities.

In planning for its establishment, the NP government made sure that unlike Wattville (a township in Benoni) which was encircled by an industrial area and white residential areas, Daveyton was established on the outskirts to allow for future expansion. As has been mentioned previously, the NP government wanted to avoid a repetition of what had happened in the Western areas of Johannesburg where the residents had to be resettled at great cost and inconvenience in Meadowlands and Diepkloof. Thus, great care was taken in the planning of Daveyton. Initially it had to accommodate about 40 000 inhabitants in 8 000 houses. According to the plan, it was meant to be the cleanest township in the country (Malinga, 1997:109). As a result, Daveyton became attractive to people looking for a place to stay; this resulted in overpopulation. [5]

In other ways, Daveyton is similar to many other South African townships. It was divided into eight distinctly separate areas for different ethnic groups (the division was clearly demarcated with sections given names according to ethnic groups occupying them), which was a norm for this period (*Sowetan*, 6 May 2002). A rapid increase in population led to the expansion of the township during the early 1970s. This expansion led to the government ordering the inclusion of Extension 1, 2 and 3 catering for the middle class. This also demonstrates the government's strategy of class stratification. Low-income groups were catered for by the creation of Etwatwa West (Extension 4, 9 and 10), while Etwatwa East (Extension 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 to 15) was the result of a forceful invasion

[5] For more information on the growth of population in Daveyton see page 71 of this work.

during the late 80's without proper planning (*see maps on pp 74, 75*). This in general meant that like other townships, Daveyton became divided into three parts. These were the old and the new, which consisted of modern houses for the middle class, and squatter settlements for low-income earners. Most Rastafarians are found in the latter and it will be interesting to establish if there is a correlation between Rastafarianism and class. This thesis thus attempts to provide insights into important features of South Africa's social change, class and ethnic formations.

## 1.2 Conclusion

The study that follows is an attempt to map the origins of Rastafarianism in Daveyton, the nature it took when it was introduced its acceptance, growth, popularity and modification. This is done by first discussing the origin of the township of Daveyton and the origin of Rastafarianism in Daveyton. In order to understand how the Movement was introduced and received in Daveyton, it is important first to trace its general origin in Jamaica and its subsequent introduction in South Africa.

An analysis of how Rastafarians of Daveyton gather for the purposes of worship and the description of those outstanding characteristics that best describe them helps in understanding how their identity as Rastafarians emerged and the extent to which these characteristics mark them out from the rest of the society. Taking into account the features of millenarian movements (*see Chapter Four*) attempts will be made to establish the extent to which the Rastafarian movement can be seen to be millennial. Keeping in mind the nature of sub-cultural groups and theories relating to the process of identity formation, endeavours will be made to answer the question of whether Rastafarians constitute what can be called a sub-culture and of why and how they managed to form and maintain their own separate identity. Interdisciplinary literature is used in the study to answer these questions. The implication of this is the need for contextualising Rastafarianism in South Africa; hence, the need for a more thorough methodology.

# CHAPTER TWO

## Literature Review

This thesis draws on various precedents in the historical literature, particularly of South Africa. The topic requires that the researcher also draw on various disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology and theology. Essentially, this research is a historical study (*see p. 4*), for the following reasons:

a) Employs a specific methodology grounded in professional practices related to collecting and analysing various kinds of evidence, both documentary and oral,
b) Follows dominant historical practices of situating data collected in specific material conditions, while acknowledging the impact of change whether from above or below,
c) Attempts to understand causality by examining a number of possible related factors, and
d) Pays attention to questions concerning human agency.

The thesis provides an analysis of these conditions focusing on the dynamic nature of culture and identity. The use of diverse literature drawn from a number of disciplines will help to understand that these concepts are contested and controversial in post-apartheid South Africa. These diverse literatures will also assist in assessing whether or not there is cohesive group identity, and if there is, how is it maintained, at what point does it break down and how does it relate to the dominant culture. The literatures also help in determining the extent to which the Rastafarian Movement can be classified as a cultural or subcultural group, and the abilities of Rastafarians as individuals or a group to constitute what can be called a personal and group identity. However, it should be reiterated that

though this thesis borrows from various disciplines, it is grounded in historical work and takes primarily a historical view of identity formation. The review of relevant literature below is divided into two parts: those works that are derived from other disciplines (psychology, sociology, anthropology and theology) and those that are historical in nature. General literatures on Rastafarianism and the establishment of the township of Daveyton were also used to inform the thesis.

## 2.1 Interdisciplinary Literature

Various disciplines are useful when dealing with issues of identity and culture. Fortunately, there is much work done on these concepts. Literatures under these divisions are those dealing with identities, their formation and nature, those that deal with culture and subculture, and those that deal with identity with specific reference to the Rastafarianism. With this background, part of the methodology used in this study cuts across boundaries. For this reason, this makes it difficult to classify these literatures into specific genres.

### 2.1.1 Identity

Literature dealing with both identity and culture may be divided into those that are general in approach and those that are specific to Africa and South Africa. One of the most important references dealing with the nature of identity in general is the book by Sarup, (1996) entitled *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World.* This book is relevant to the topic because of the angle from which it approaches the subject of identity. Drawing on various contemporary theories, Sarup tackles identity as heterogeneous. He sees it as a multidimensional space in which varieties of arguments blend and clash (*Ibid*). His major argument is that identity has to do with more than one human aspect, particularly his physical appearance. It has also to do with who one thinks one is, what one believes and what one does. According to him, our identities are not entirely determined, because there are counter-identifications at work as well. Hence, identities are not homogeneous or simply collective; we have several contradictory selves (*Ibid*).

Anderson, (1991) in his book *Imagined Communities*, examines the history of nationhood, and provides a good theoretical background with regard to the development of group identities. In his answer about when and how nations evolved, Anderson maintains that nations have not always existed. He argues that they only came into existence relatively recently, for various material and ideological reasons, which he explores in detail. He famously defines nations as 'imagined political communities', imagined in the sense that they are both inherently limited and sovereign. They are imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their community. Nations are also considered limited because even the largest of them has fixed but flexible boundaries beyond which lie other nations.

The relevance of Anderson's work in this study is that he sees nations as having (to a certain extent) originated from religious communities (the imaginary), in other words, of a religious community. Anderson argues that before the idea of nations came about, there was a sense of community based on other kinds of connections, for example religious affiliation. In this connection, Rastafarianism also traces its origin to the Jewish and Christian religious communities. The question here may be whether Rastafarianism is fundamentally a religious community or whether there is a sense of 'nationhood' in Anderson's sense of an 'imagined political community'.

Another relevant literature on identity, which cites South African as an example, is entitled *Between Camps: Race, Identity and Nationalism at the end of the Colour Line* by Gilroy (2000). Gilroy argues against the idea of race and campaigns for its abolition, perhaps drawing inspiration from Anderson. He sees the idea of race as entirely imagined and argues that it is meaningless and with very destructive consequences. Drawing on the biblical stories of nation building he shows how disorganised and internally divided groups were formed into coherent units capable of unified action and worthy of special status. He uses the examples both of the history of the Children of Israel and that of the Afrikaners to demonstrate

how groups have used religious myths to legitimate their claims to possessing a unique racial mission. For Afrikaner history, he says:

> Their ethically minded ideologues systematically modified an Afrikaner identity during the period that saw the rise of fascist movements elsewhere. They provided their political community with its own version of Christianity and a set of myths that were the basis for the elaborate political drama that summoned their historic nation into racialized being (Gilroy, 2000:102).

Gilroy takes the issue of identity in South Africa a step further by describing how, after the demise of apartheid President Nelson Mandela worked towards forging a new identity for the new South Africa. He observes:

> Working to produce an alternative content for the new non-racial, postcolonial, or perhaps antiracial political identity that might draw together the citizenry of the reborn country on a new basis beyond the grasp of racializing codes and fantasies of favoured life as people chosen by God (*Ibid*:110).

Here, Gilroy is emphasising the proposed secular rebirth of the nation against the background of Afrikaner nationalism having cultivated a supposedly privileged relationship with God.

The questions remain whether Rastafarianism is essentially religious, how this relates to the tenets of the secular nation established and envisaged from 1994 onwards, and whether or not the Rastafarians' relationship with God is based on the same kind of exclusive premise as Afrikaner Calvinism. It is striking that post 1994 South Africa is trying quite hard to reconstitute itself as a secular state, in that it includes religious presentations in various public rituals. More directly relevant to this thesis in the work of Gilroy is his reference to the role that Bob Marley played in popularising Rastafarianism with its militant identity of Ethiopianism by propagating Rastafarianism through reggae into a globalised popular culture (*Ibid*). Gilroy observes

> Just as soul and reggae were gifts to overground youth cultures in earlier period, today these styles have become the heart of globalised pop culture creating an unmarked-upon intensity of potentially race transcending feeling in the pre-packaged, body-transcending cultures of teen consumer everywhere (*Ibid:*196).

Gilroy argues for a change in the appeal of reggae music through global media, which may be transcendent in some ways. It is through the media and recently the internet that Rastafarians of Daveyton learn more about language or new reggae songs and keep themselves generally informed.

The most important genre of references that deal with identity are those that focus on the African continent after colonialism or South Africa after apartheid. An example of such a source is the book edited by Werbner and Ranger, (1989) entitled *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*. It provides a background overview of identity formation and its problems in post-colonial Africa. Although it is concerned with Africa as a whole, arguments put forward on the issue of identity are also applicable to the South African situation. For example, identity crises that most African states experienced after colonialism is a reality in South Africa as well.[6] One dominant feature of the apartheid government was that the process of forming one common identity among blacks was consciously prevented through the ideology of ethnic and race divisions and the segregation legislation. When apartheid was abolished, many blacks found themselves in a state of confusion, because they had to consider what an African identity might constitute. However, this new identity could not escape the influences of colonialism, apartheid and the general conditions of the late 1920's. As a result, blacks in South Africa found themselves engaged in a process of identity formation without understanding the type of identity they wanted to articulate.

Manganyi, (1981) *Looking through the Keyhole: Dissenting Essays on the Black Experience,* is a collection of previously unpublished essays - particularly relevant is the essay on 'Culture and Identity'. Manganyi argues that identities are usually constructed during times of crisis and shows how the experience of colonialism in South Africa supports his line of argument (*Ibid*: 65-66). Referring to the early years of colonialism, he argues that at the beginning of the colonial encounter there were guns, assegais and Bibles, English Readers and culturally distinct rituals. This suggests a confused legacy that was marked with black-white conflict

[6] Identity crises imply having to reconcile the colonial identity with the African one or having to substitute colonial identity with a new one.

and the result of this is that our so-called heroes are not accepted across cultural and racial lines (*Ibid*: 67). The importance of Manganyi's work also lies in the fact that he goes on to suggest solutions for problems associated with the process of identity formation. One of the solutions for him lies in the adoption of a new language for new meanings, which he calls Africanisation. He asserts that it is useful, not only to questions of culture and identity, but also to matters affecting the character of universities and curricula (*Ibid:* 70-71*)*.

Thornton, (1997) in an article entitled "The Potentials of boundaries in South Africa: Steps Towards a Theory of the Social Edge" outlines how the process of identity construction has become difficult in post-apartheid South Africa but unlike Manganyi, he does not make a suggestion as to the probable solutions.

Other important works on the question of identity are *The South African Society: Realities and Future Prospects* (1987) by the Human Science Research Council and Bonnin, *et.al,* (1998) "Identity and the Changing Politics of Gender. The importance of the first work is that even though it does not state it explicitly, it highlights the complexity of identities in South Africa arising from the segmented or divided composition of the country's population that were expressed in terms of race and ethnicity. The latter sources deal with women (and also gay and lesbian) identities in post-apartheid South Africa. The importance of this latter work is its emphasis on the formation of gender identities. In the opinion of the authors, women are still subordinated to men in South Africa. They argue that the transformation is incomplete (*Ibid*: 35). As most of the research reveals, Rastafarianism seems to be predominantly male, and this is an observation that requires exploration. As will be demonstrated further in this study, in Daveyton among male Rastafarians egalitarian attitudes towards women seem to be developing when compared to the feelings of other South African Rastafarians.[7] For example, they do not like reggae songs that undermine women such as those sung by Lucky Dube (South African reggae musician), which says *over my dead*

[7] Even though women cannot do some of the things that are done by men, Rastafarians of Daveyton always insist that they must respected and refer to them as *Queens*.

*body will I make tea for a woman*. During *reasoning,* Lucky Dube is always criticised for this attitude (*Observation*, 06th April 2002).

### 2.1.2 Culture

Literature on cultural studies is also important in describing the process of identity formation. The book: *An Introduction to the Study of African Culture* by Ayasi, (1992), shows the complexities of the concept culture. He bases his argument on the fact that no culture is exclusive and peculiar to a specific society, which implies that no culture is pure. Of relevance to this study is his consideration of family, marriage and festivals/celebrations as important components of culture.

The book entitled *In Township Tonight! : South Africa's Black City Music and Theatre* Coplan, (1994) is also important, both for the author's conception of culture and for his explanation of method. Coplan traces the evolution of black urban culture and music from the slave culture in Cape Town to the urban centres of Kimberly and Johannesburg. Coplan argues that African culture and music in urban areas is the product of the slum yards and adjacent slum locations, where apartheid denied the formation of social identity amongst blacks by oppressing the growth of stable social institutions and values. This performance culture eventually became integrated into the new urban culture. Using participant observation as his method of gathering information, Coplan provides a rich analysis of the origin and development of black performance culture. His book, he argues, is attributed to the cultural and spiritual vitality of black South Africans, who humanised a wasteland of oppression and neglect, and produced a rich expression of both the conditions and aspirations of their lives (*Ibid*: 6). Coplan (1985), was concerned with the interpretation of songs and performance or dance and music. Explaining his methodology, which includes the interpretation of historical messages contained in songs, he stresses the importance of language by arguing that "language as culture, its categories and the way they are used shape the style of historical construction," (Coplan, 1994: 11).

In his revised version of *In Township Tonight* (2007) Coplan surveys the development of black urban culture into the 1990s. Coplan argues that contrary to expectations township culture was not suburbanised nor did it embrace reconciliation ideology. Instead, there was an African renaissance led by the 'still-marginalised youth.' (Coplan, 2007:419). He goes on to suggest that township music is helping to define 'emerging South African identities.' (Coplan, 2007:420). He concludes by saying that there is 'now for the first time an urban history the chance (for township artists) to play their own song, enact their own story intheir own way and in their own name'. (*Ibid).*

### 2.1.3 Subculture

There are also literatures dealing with subcultures. These are however vast, only a selection of the relevant ones are considered. The most important one is *The Subcultures Reader* edited by Gelder and Thornton, (1987). This work attempts to provide a definition of the concept of subcultures and traces the origin of the concept. In addition, it looks at how particular social groups emerged and developed as subcultures separate from the mainstream culture as well as highlights the attitude of authorities and society towards a subculture. Another important work dealing with subculture is *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* by Hebdige, (1987). Apart from outlining the relationship between Rastafarianism and Christian mythology, Hebdige endeavours to find the connection between Rastafarianism and other subcultures or youth culture like the Punks and Skinheads. He concludes that the two cannot be compared: while the latter are purely youth organisations in Rastafarianism, young and old are part of the same defensively organised collective, bound together by the idea of centuries of naked oppression.

Other contributions in this Reader are: *On the Importance of Subcultural Origins,* Stratton (1987); *Subcultural Conflict and the Working-Class Community,* Cohen (1987); *Subcultures, Cultures and Class,* Clarke, *et al* (1987)*; Symbols of Trouble,* Cohen (1987); *Black Hair/Style Politics,* Mercer (1987); and *Diaspora, Utopia, and the Critique of Capitalism,* Gilroy, (1987). The common argument is that most

subcultures (except the Hippies) developed in working class communities; Rastafarianism appears as a central example in the argument. Rastafarianism seems to have developed and still develops in working class communities, despite what has been said above about universal identification through the global media.

In their book: *Youth Cultures: A Cross-Cultural Perspective,* Amid-Talai and Wulff (1995) provide a critical anthropological analysis of how youth cultures have been perceived and studied. An important contribution in this book is entitled "Introducing Youth Culture in its own Right: The State of the New Possibilities", by Wulff, H. According to her, the earlier writings on youth culture in terms of socialisation, education or human development portrayed youths as objects of adult activity, problems, victims or resisters. She argues that there has been no analysis of youth cultural reproduction, globalisation and creolisation (*Ibid:* 1-2*)*. She means that there is silence about how youth cultures reproduce themselves, have become global phenomena, and have devised their own language, an intrinsic characteristic of youth culture. Some of her observations point to aspects of Rastafarianism that should be studied and explained; however, note that Rastafarianism is not exclusively a youth culture.

Another important contribution in Amid-Talai and Wulff's is by Caputo, "Anthropology's Silent 'Others': A Consideration of some Conceptual and Methodological Issues for the Study of Youth and Children Cultures". Caputo touches on two important issues of relevance to this study, namely the use of participant observation and the role of music (a vital Rastafarian practice) in understanding youth culture. She argues that there are positive aspects of the participant observation method – it gives researchers the opportunity to experience at close hand aspects of the youth's world *(Ibid:* 30*)*.

A recent work on sub-cultures is *Beyond Subculture: Pop, Youth and Identity in a Post Colonial World* by Huq (2006). Huq looks at youth culture and music and attempts to understand the relationship between the two. In examining this relationship, he

investigates a number of musically centred global youth cultures in order to establish the possibility of labelling one genre of music as the main voice of the youth, taking into consideration today's diverse and globalised world. This thesis therefore endeavours to understand the relationship between Rastafarianism and reggae music.

## 2.2 Historical Literature

Several historical works also inform this thesis such as *The Dead will Arise: Nongqawuse and the Great Xhosa Cattle-Killing Movement of 1856-7* (Peires, 2003). In keeping with the pioneering academic work of his time, Peires makes a point of using oral sources. Through his interviews and the documented oral sources, Peires' work represents an attempt to hear 'the Xhosa' side of the story although he is faced with many problems in this attempt. He realises, for instance, that there is more than one Xhosa side. The division between those who believed in Nongqawuse's prophesy and those who did not account for some of the differences. Peires realises that he needs to distinguish between those who believed in the prophecy and those who did not and to understand the emotions the different responses to the prophecy evoked.

His argument about the causes of the Cattle-Killing episode is essentially that it was a reaction by some Xhosa chiefdoms to extreme dispossession over the course of the nineteenth century as British colonial control encroached onto their territory. He argues that the Xhosa were desperate by the 1850s, under the impact of the new experience of 'total war' waged on them periodically by the British, devastating land loss, and the undermining of the power of the chiefs by Governor George Grey's administrative system of Indirect Rule caused many Xhosa to put their hope in millenarian prophesies.

In his explanation, Peires argues that the ground was prepared for Nongqawuse's vision half a century prior to the prophecy because there was a series of prophets

who were war leaders or spiritual prophets among the Xhosa. According to Peires, the 'form' that the killing took was determined by the lung sickness epidemic that had caused the colonial authorities to order widespread culling. The idea of contamination and sacrifice came from a synthesis of Christian and indigenous religion that had been evolving over the course of this century to which Peires pays detailed attention. From this brief synopsis, Peires's argument about the cattle killing is many faceted. Essentially, he grounds his argument for why the Xhosa resorted to millenarianism in an explanation of their deteriorating material (and concomitantly psychological) conditions.

Peires has been criticised for undermining the significance of lung sickness and for overplaying or underplaying Nongqawuse's prophesy as the main immediate cause of the killing. Julian Cobbing even went to the extent of saying "because of his faulty emphasis, Peires fails to ask some important questions. Might the killings have been for quarantine or for consumption as occurred among the Ndebele during the lung sickness epidemics of 1862?" The distinction between killing and dying of cattle is left unexplored (Cobbing, 1994:2).

Another critic, Randall Packard, charges that many of Peires's personalities and participants involved in the incident, particularly Africans, have either received inadequate coverage or been presented in ways that reflected the ethnocentric and racial prejudices of contemporary observers Parkard, (1991:576). Peires is also criticised for providing a thorough material explanation for the Xhosas' belief in this period; he may be seen as undercutting their spiritual beliefs - putting them down to a desperate measure instead of respecting their beliefs as a way of seeing and critiquing the world. This point to the kind of difficult balance one has to maintain when trying to assess religious beliefs in a material context, for without care one might easily swing into a reductionist argument, that is, one that gives no credit to the ideas themselves.

Other important works dealing with millenarianism are Edgar ( 2000) and Cohn, (1957). All these suggest that the reason some Xhosa were attracted to prophet

Mgijima's millennial message was the mounting economic and political pressure on rural Africans. Mgijima's prophecies promised a reversal of roles where the outcasts were to become God's chosen and blessed ones; this was obviously extremely attractive. In his message to his followers called the 'Israelites', Mgijima claimed to have heard a message from God who told him of a catastrophic war on earth which was going to destroy all sinners, a common theme of final judgement and apocalypse (Edgar, 1988:11,13).

In their most recent publication Edgar and Sapire (2000), Edgar argues that Nontetha's (a prophet from the Eastern Cape) prophesies were a result of the world's most devastating influenza epidemic which tore through Southern Africa after World War I, leaving hundreds of thousands of people dead in its wake. In its aftermath, many revivalist and millenarian movements sprang up seeking a meaning and an answer to the question of why the calamity took place (*Ibid: xix-*xx*)*. Nontetha claimed to have heard a voice telling her that the influenza was just a taste of what God was bringing, a judgement day in which everyone will be flying in the sky (*Ibid:*10*)*. This was interpreted as a threat by the segregationist government that incarcerated Nontetha for life. The government feared Nontetha's prophecy in the light of the Bulhoek massacre. She told her disciples: "They had to ask God to liberate them and allow them to rule their country according to their own nationhood" (*Ibid:* 72).

Edgar based his earlier analysis on the premise that the Israelites were not an isolated example of Xhosa millennialism, and refers to other similar movements within Xhosa society such as the Wellington Movement, under Dr. Wellington Buthelezi, a Garveyite disciple in the 1920's, who predicted an African-American liberator would free South Africa from white oppression. Other prophecies include that of Enoch Mgijima of the Israelites[8] and Nontetha, Nxele or Makana, Ntsikana and of Mlanjeni who used their prophetic powers to rouse and mobilise resistance against European presence (Edgar, 1988:11, 13). Edger concluded,

[8] Similar to Rastafarian movement, the Israelites observed Saturday as their Sabbath and sung *By the Rivers of Babylon* as one their hymn. There are also great similarities between the Wellington movement and Rastafarianism.

"Although their messages and style of leadership differed, these movements shared much common ground and integrated Christian idiom into their message." (Edgar and Saphire, 2000: x-xi). In Nontetha's case, for example, her illness and her dream both incorporated Xhosa beliefs, tenets, Christian symbols, the emphasis on regeneration, renewal, and resurrection, which are explicable in terms of Christian beliefs (*Ibid:*10-11). The significance of this is that those millenarian movements seem to originate because of contact between traditional beliefs and Christianity. The Christian idiom tends to foster ideas about the end of the world and the resurrection of the just. Having emerged because of contact between traditional beliefs and Christianity, and believing in the end of the existing order and its replacement with a new one, Rastafarianism can be seen as millenarian. However, when other characteristics of millenarian movements are taken into consideration, it cannot strictly be classified as one.

There are also international literatures on millenarianism, but these are not examined in detail in this thesis. These literatures are useful in answering questions such as what constitutes a millenarian movement. A very useful example of international literature is Cohn (1957). He provides a detailed study of millenarian movements in the world over time. He describes both Jewish and Christian communities as millenarian in nature. It should be noted that Rastafarianism draws most of its belief systems from Jewish and Christian religions. Cohn also gives a comprehensive explanation of what causes people to resort to millenarianism, explores its nature, and concludes that millennial movements tend to be similar in many respects.[9]

Placed in a bigger context, this thesis attempts to establish in detail how Rastafarian thoughts and actions differ from those of other religious movements in relation to the spiritual, secular, and power hierarchies within the institution (such as preaching and proselytising). In addition, another issue to be probed is

[9]For examples of these comprehensive explanations of what causes people to resort to millenarianism see pages 186-187 of this work.

how Rastafarianism differs from other social movements in relation to views concerning gender, family, abortion, homosexuality, food, clothing and music.

## 2.3 Literature on Rastafarianism

This type of literature is varied. It ranges from theological (those dealing with the nature of the movement) to historical (those that deal with the origin and development), and includes both secondary and primary sources. These works range from those focusing on Rastafarianism in Jamaica and Britain to a few that deals with the Movement in South Africa.[10] These sources provide valuable information on the origin, spread and general characteristics of the Movement. The most important reference in this regard is the work edited by Chevannes (1998a). His work provides a clear understanding with regard to the conditions under which the Movement emerged, its belief system, social organisation and the origin of those symbolic features that have come to be the hallmark of the Movement. Another work of significance is Chevannes (1998b) *Rastafari.* This is important because it discusses the theological ground upon which Rastafarianism was founded and throws some light on how the spirit of resistance in the form of slave revolts contributed to its emergence.

An important article highlighting the existence of the Movement in South Africa is Johnson-Hill (1996). He argues that, in spite of negative connotations attributed to Rastafarianism, the Movement is becoming popular in South Africa, and that if the government recognises it, there are a number of both social and educational contributions it can make. An example of the educational contribution from the Movement is *grounding* or *reasoning* which emphasises dialogue as a means of communicating knowledge, which could be adopted to replace the traditional method of transmission-mode teaching (*Ibid:*4). Like Bosch, Johnson's aim is to try to argue the point that Rastafarians can make a positive contribution to society's development. Although he characterised the Movement as millenarian, he argues that, unlike the adherents of most classic millenarian movements,

[10]It should be noted here that these sources only provide background information to this study as a great deal of it is based on oral sources.

Rastafarians disavow allegiance to a single charismatic leader (*Ibid*). For him, the Movement is millenarianism because he sees its emergence as a reaction to cultural oppression which slaves were subjected to in Jamaica. He describes the actual oppression by saying that:

> Once the former identity had been severely undermined, there were attempts to instil in the slaves a new value system based on British language, law and mores, as well as missionary Christianity (*Ibid:* 5).

The importance of Johnson's work is its focus on the social role that Rastafarianism could play in the period after 1994.

> Given the government's concern to develop a 'culture of learning' the self can be encouraged to raise questions and experiment with new ideas - especially regarding major social problems related to nation-building such as economic disparity, institutional racism and the spread of AIDS. The Rastas' emphasis on affirming the creative intellectual capacity of each person suggests the need for radically new approaches to education. The linguistic innovations associated with I-words in Rastafari may well prefigure parallel linguistic developments in South Africa between, for example, English, Afrikaans and African languages. Tomorrow's schools may therefore need to consider curricular reforms in the light of emerging hybrid languages, especially among the urban youth (*Ibid*: 27).

As indicated already, empirical research on the topic in South Africa has been limited to Durban and Cape Town with only one piece of research done for each area. Bosch (1996) and Oosthuizen (1990) are very important because they both deal with the Movement within the South African context. This literature helps throw some light on the position of Rastafarians in South Africa. Although Bosch's work is an Honours study, it does a lot to introduce the topic of Rastafarianism in South Africa. She attempts, not only to trace the origin of the Movement in South Africa, but also to counter misconceptions about Rastafarians; for instance, that they are a dirty group of people who have constructed a separate identity for no reason other than to smoke *ganja*. She maintains that in the past Rastafarians were mainly concerned with the struggle for the articulation of black identity, but today it seems that struggle has been reduced to a struggle for the recognition of *ganja* as a *holy herb* and their right to smoke it freely without prosecution (Bosch1996: 5). This is, however, a controversial assertion. As this thesis will demonstrate, the smoking of *ganja* is the most important component of Rastafarian identity.

Bosch further outlines the background out of which the Movement emerged both in Jamaica and in South Africa. She argues that the emergence of Rastafarianism in South Africa, as in Jamaica was the result of the particular socio-economic context of the poor (*Ibid*). For her, the popularity of the Movement in South Africa was the result of Bob Marley (in Zimbabwe) and Peter Tosh's (in Swaziland) concerts in 1986 (ten years after the Soweto riots in South Africa). This signalled a shift in emphasis in the lyrics of the Movement from preoccupation with Haile Selassie and Ethiopia to the battles for liberation in Southern Africa. Bob Marley's concert celebrated Zimbabwe's independence, with the subsequent release of a new album: *Africa Unite.* Peter Tosh's concert in Swaziland was a direct challenge to the apartheid government evident in the songs such as *Fight against Apartheid.*

However, Rastafarianism in South Africa, according to Bosch, acquired more of a cultural than a political form, as it remained an expression of, and struggle for, black identity (*Ibid:* 9). This is perhaps one reason Rastafarians as such were not involved in the struggle against apartheid. A problem with Bosch's work is that although a video camera was used to document information, there is no detailed description of the activities such as when, why and how the Rastafarians meet for congregation. This is very important when conducting a study of this nature.

The book *Rastafarians* by Oosthuizen (1990) is perhaps the most all-encompassing source on Rastafarianism in South Africa. Explaining how he gathered information, Oosthuizen indicated that his work is the result of the utilisation of both reliable historical material and able field-workers. He explains that in conducting his survey, field-workers with questionnaires were sent to gather information in the townships of Soweto and Umlazi, in the Durban area. About twenty adherents in all with an average age of nearly twenty-six and an average schooling of just above Standard 6 were interviewed. The fact that most of the adherents are not educated is an indication of the social background from which most of them come. The significance of Oosthuizen's work is that it gives answers the questions: How do Rastafarians communicate with Jah? Why and how is the

Movement joined? What are their activities and practices? What is the place of the bible in the Movement? What are their social and political responsibilities? What is the meaning of their colours, salutations, and of Zion? Written from a theological perspective, Oosthuizen's study provides an analysis of Rastafarian beliefs and practices in South Africa. He does not draw any conclusions about the socio-economic position of those who were interviewed.

Apart from tracing its origin to Jamaica and its historical roots in South Africa, Oosthuizen describes in detail the phases leading to the Rastafarian process of self-identity. During the first of these phases, the youths become aware of race discrimination and the new symbolic meaning that it brings to black people. Secondly, they lost belief in the faith of their parents and society in general, together with the structure that they apparently supported. The third step is that they start to associate with Rastafarians. Lastly, they accept Rastafari as the divine redeemer of black people (Oosthuizen, 1990:21-22). Oosthuizen concludes his work with an argument that Rastafarianism cannot be ignored in South Africa, and that it deserves attention from all who are interested in the forces that influence black youths, and especially those which give them a sense of belonging (*Ibid: 22*). He maintains that there is a relationship between the Movement and the social and political situation and that the youths are the ones who are mostly attracted to the Movement.

The problem with Oosthuizen's work, however, is that a greater part of it focuses on the general aspect of the Movement with little information on its activities in South Africa. This might be attributed to the fact that it is based only on person-to-person interviews. Researchers cannot obtain information about how certain aspects of the Movement, such as praying, preaching, singing and dancing are enacted without sustained observation. Further, Oosthuizen does not break down the interviews into those of Umlazi and those of Soweto.

## 2.4 Literature on Daveyton

There is a general lack of sources that deal with Daveyton. The available sources do not directly relate to this topic. There are no published secondary sources available on Daveyton; therefore, information is limited. Malinga's Masters Dissertation *The Establishment of the Black Townships in South Africa with Particular Reference to the Establishment of Daveyton on the East Rand* (1997) is informative on the origin and development of Daveyton. Malinga's study outlines not only the origin and development of the township but also the social and economic problems faced by residents from its inception to the nineties. It shows vividly that, in spite of the government's aim to make it a habitable township, lack of housing and services became serious problems working against Daveyton's success as a model township.

Other informative works are by Mashabela (1988), Bonner (2001). Mashabela's work is a profile of thirty-two black townships in the Gauteng province including Daveyton. It provides a background against which black townships originated. The book by Bonner and Nieftagodien, although it focuses on the Near East

Rand Townships of Katlehong, Thokoza and Vosloorus is also useful for Daveyton. It allows ordinary people to tell their stories, and these become instruments for mapping the changing patterns of township life. Its importance is in the range of interviews that the authors conducted. The book describes in detail the prevailing economic and political conditions on the East Rand prior to 1994. It also gives an account of people's 'whole' experiences during the wars of the early nineties by looking at the role of various gangs, civil rights movements, student organisations, individuals as well other organisations, such as those in the hostel and taxi industry.

The problem with the available literature on Daveyton is that it is mainly concerned with economic, social and political development with little or no mention made of the religious beliefs of its inhabitants. The reason for this in Bonner and Nieftagodien's case is that this publication is not an academic work

but a popular one commissioned by the communities on the East Rand, which put some pressure on the authors to tell an 'official' history. Their orientation as social historians might also have caused them to overlook religious beliefs, although Bonner did some important work in the eighties on the millenarian aspect of the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union. Though focusing on an early period, another work done on the East Rand in general is by Bonner (1988) entitled *Family, Crime and Political Consciousness on the East Rand, 1939-1955*. This article outlines the early attempts to control influx of blacks in the town of Benoni under J Mathewson, the Non-European Affairs manager (*Ibid:* 339).

## 2.5 Electronic and other Sources

Electronic sources form an important part in exploring both the issues of identity formation and Rastafarianism. The focus here is mainly on those electronic sources that are scholarly in nature. These include Van der Vyver (2000) and Abdi (1999). These works show how South Africans have come to develop their identities over time. Van der Vyver explores the constitutional perspective of the Church-State relationship of both the periods before and after apartheid in South Africa. This reference shows how the introduction of foreign religions (Christianity and Islam) destroyed traditional African religion that led to the emergence of independent Christian churches, which is in contrast with Peires's analysis that emphasises synthesis. Of interest in this source is an outline on the establishment of religion under the current constitution in South Africa. The significance of Lotter (1998) "Personal Identity in Multicultural Constitutional Democracies" lies in the way he explores the formation of personal identities in multicultural democracies. The central argument here is that "awareness of, and respect for differences of gender, race, religion, language, and culture have liberated many from the hegemony of white, Western males." (*Ibid*: 6).

According to Denis-Constant (1995) in the work: "The Choices of Identity", identity is an ambiguous concept that cannot be defined but can be understood by contrasting it with other identities. Making use of the linguistic innovation (the '*I-*

*lect*',that is, manners of speaking in the first person) created by the Rastafarians, he shows how Rastafarians managed to create boundaries separating them from non-Rastafarians to enable them to maintain their identity.

There are also other valuable electronic sources dealing with the Rastafarian Movement. These are important because they cover not only the origin and nature of the Movement but deal with Rastafarianism today. These sources include Napti (2003), Kebede and Knottnerus (1998), Stanglin and Eddings (1996).

## 2.6 Conclusion

Although historical in nature, this study draws on various literatures that are not historical. These literatures mainly deal with the nature and formation of identity, culture and subculture. There is a large body of historical literature that focus on millenarianism, which is useful in determining whether Rastafarianism is millenarian or not. Though not sufficient, there are also literatures that deal with the establishment and prevailing conditions in the township of Daveyton. This provides the background against which Rastafarianism emerged.

Due to the limited nature of written sources or research on Rastafarianism in South Africa and the fact that the study is an attempt to document contemporary history, it is mainly based on established historical methodology, namely participant observation and oral interviews. The next chapter examines the approach followed and defines important concepts used.

# CHAPTER THREE

## Methodology and Central Conceptual Tools

In this chapter, I describe and reflect on my methodology and central conceptual tools. This locates this study in the field of Social Sciences, but with an historical bias (see introduction for breakdown of how this is interpreted). This chapter largely borrows from approaches used by scholars working in the field of social history, with emphasis on cultural and religious manifestations such as Belinda Bozzoli (1991), David Coplan (1994), Deborah James (1999), Isabel Hofmeyr (1994), Jeffrey Peires (2003), Tim Keegan (1998), and Robert Edgar (1988). These scholars work from certain perspectives and in the broad area of social history. The social history school endeavours to study 'ordinary' people as key to understanding the past using oral evidence. Keegan, James and Bozzoli's methodologies are mainly based on oral interviews where informants were asked questions about their life experiences and information obtained is then used to reconstruct their life stories. Coplan's approach is based on participant observation.

The approach followed by Peires (2003) and Edgar (1988), both of whom draw on oral testimonies, is of studying events or incidents in the light of prevailing conditions and establishing relations between these and the prevailing conditions. This chapter thus looks at various approaches followed in similar studies, and assesses the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches. It also looks at the concepts that are central to this study and describes in detail the research methodology followed. These concepts are Rastafari, identity and culture, and are defined in various ways by various authors without reaching any consensus.

## 3.1 Research Methodologies

As indicated, the approach followed includes mainly participant observation and oral interviews. This methodology is not without problems. For example, if informants become aware that they are under observation they may alter their behaviour. The same goes for interviews. Interviewees are likely to paint very rosy pictures if the information they have to provide is about them, as was sometimes the case in this study. In most cases, this results in a one-sided account of information not representative of the population at large or any particular segment of it (Grele, 1998: 41). The theoretical literature on oral history also points to how informants perceive the researcher and the research. This in itself poses another serious challenge if informants are suspicious and do not trust the researcher or what the research is to be used for, and they are likely to withhold relevant and important information. It is important, therefore, as in the case of Belinda Bozzoli's work, to explain fully the purpose of the interview and what the information will be used for (Bozzoli, 1991: 150). For example, informants in this study were initially worried that the research should not be used to discredit Rastafarianism. From the above it may be noted how difficult it is to assess the representativity or reliability of information. Recent literature, however, suggests deeper readings of what informants say. It is by identifying remarks, patterns, inflexions or metaphors that the researcher can discover the significance of the story being told (*Ibid*).

In spite of the above challenges, evidence obtained for this thesis is used to determine whether there is any relationship between the political, social and economic conditions and Rastafarianism (in terms of reasons for origin, activities and aims). Evidence obtained in this way helps in the following ways:

- To appreciate the significance of rituals
- To interpret lyrics and language that is obscure
- To explore and elaborate on core values
- To understand how Rastafarianism functions as cohesive units

- To discover reasons for a split between *houses*
- To establish correlations between socio-economic conditions, political perception and Rastafarianism.

Jorgensen describes the usefulness of participant observation as follows:

> Through participant observation, it is possible to describe what goes on, who or what is involved, when and where things happen, how they occur, and why - at least from the standpoint of participants – things happen as they do in particular situations (Jorgensen, 1999:12).

The reason for participant observation as an appropriate methodology is that Rastafarianism can be best understood in this way. This methodology is appropriate in cases where little is known about the phenomenon. There are important differences between the views of insiders as opposed to outsiders, the phenomenon is somehow obscured from the views of outsiders, or the phenomenon is hidden from public view (*Ibid*). This methodology is also appropriate where procedures are not fixed or stable as in the case of *grounation* (the first session during gathering or congregation).

Following the established historical methodology set by Keegan (1988) and Bozzoli (1991), oral interviews were used to obtain information about life histories of informants. Keegan examines the lives of four ordinary men and uses their life stories to investigate and explain the general social and economic transformation that took place in rural South Africa. Explaining why he used ordinary men as his sources, he argues that:

> In the narratives of ordinary people's lives we begin to see some of the major forces of history at work, large social forces that are questionably the real key to understanding the past, which an exclusive focus on the lives and activities of great men not only makes it difficult to understand, but also misrepresent (*Keegan, 1988:168*).

This is representative of social history principles. It works on the principle that through lives of ordinary people, historical forces are illuminated. However, there

is always the question of which people we choose, and how the researcher decides how to tell their narratives. Keegan organises the narrative according to turning points, themes, life stages or common experiences, as does Bozzoli. The latter is aware of the fact that particular methodological weapons, such as the structured attitude survey, the questionnaire, or the rigid interview are poor tools for analysing a person's consciousness. Yet, ordinary life cannot be told in an unmediated way. Researchers need to be conscious of their own biases, perspectives or degree of intervention (Bozzoli, 1991: 12).

This study also attempts to document and interpret some of the songs sung by Rastafarians during gatherings, their anthem and creed. This method of interpretation is based on the work of James (1991). She focuses on a Bapedi speaking migrant women's dance group, and attempts to establish how images of home are created through musical performance. She shows how migrant women, scattered in the suburbs as domestic workers managed to construct a migrant identity through performing 'traditional' music and dance (*Ibid:* 186). In a more systematic way than Coplan (1985), she states that she developed a three-pronged methodology. The first was participant observation, which involved long hours of observing performance, and asking participants and audiences about the nature and significance of various aspects of music and dance. The second entailed discussions (often leading to intense arguments among participants) with individual performers or groups about the significance of music and lyrics. The last approach involved discussions, sometimes recorded and subsequently transcribed, with particular informants aimed at collecting life histories (*Ibid: 5-6*). James concluded, based on this three-pronged approach, that the culture and tradition of women migrants, which they claimed to be loyal to, had mostly been invented in the urban areas, since it bore precious little resemblance to performing arts in the rural areas. She also argues that their identity was shaped by:

> Their assumption of new roles conceived of as similar to those of men, their ability to exist as relatively autonomous breadwinners, and their aspirations to educate themselves or at least their younger siblings and children do indeed appear as emancipated. They have created an identity by selecting and interweaving elements from the shifting terrains of manhood and womanhood (James, 1991:190,193).

Similarly explaining his research methodology, Coplan (1985) says:

> I spent my time among musicians, talent scouts, producers theatrical directors and actors, journalists, managers, social workers, educators shebeen (tavern) patrons, students, and eccentric hangers-on like myself. For the next year, I moved about Johannesburg and other cities, observing and participating in performances and other family and community events, attending rehearsals, recording sessions, plays, clubs, and concert, interviewing past and present members of the performance community (*Ibid:*1-2).

From the above quote, it is clear that Coplan was less precise about his methodological approach than was James, but immersed himself in the community he was studying, which was compatible with his understanding that culture is characterised by dynamism and agency. By becoming part of the society that he was studying, Coplan was able to collect songs during the actual performances. It is true that his approach was a bit haphazard in the sense that he could not calculate beforehand how many performances he would attend; what kind of representative sample they would add up to. By using participant observation, he sought to understand the social experiences and process of class formation among black urbanites: how and why they came to the urban areas, and how they created new institutions, communities and cultural forms. He did this by placing contemporary black performance culture in the context of historical processes and social forces that had shaped it (*Ibid:* 2).

Coplan adopted the same methodology for his later book *In the Time of Cannibals; The Word Music of South Africa's Basotho Migrants* (1994) where participant observation performances were followed up by interviews on the spot or after the performance. He hunted down performers, taped them, then transcribed, translated and interpreted text (*Ibid*). His fieldwork concerned itself with the interpretation of the Basotho migrants' songs to establish if there was any continuity between rural and urban performance. Coplan's evaluation of continuity/discontinuity of tradition, just as in the case of James, raises the issue of interpretation. Their interpretations are based on their particular understandings of history and of migrant experiences. Like James, Coplan was not only interested in the texts of songs, but also in the performances and the music that accompanied them. For him, the music had meaning apart from the

words and this means that it became the task of the researcher to explain this meaning. He contends that interpretations of songs and performances require the application of analytical concepts and procedures, not only from cultural anthropology, but from sociology and history as well (*Ibid:* xvii).

Coplan's methodology involves "the interpretation of a sample of such performances and genres. So certain Basotho, migrant men and women, respond to their situation with complex, evocative word-music, creating a cultural shield against dependency, expropriation, and the dehumanising relations of race and class in Southern Africa" (*Ibid: 8*). The relevance of this methodology is in its appreciation of culture as embedded in historical experience capable of complex evolution and modification interwoven in the character of words, music, performance and oral testimony.

Moodie (1994) is useful for this thesis. The authors tried to understand the experiences of migrant workers within their social context and to achieve this they used their own interpretations of a number of accounts. Their work is as a result an interpretation of evidence from participant observation, old men's stories, young men's reflections, the life histories of women, and testimony from black unionists (*Ibid:* 2). In a similar way, this thesis is an interpretation of evidence drawn from participant observation, which includes several life histories and testimonies from the community. The difference though is that both my own and that of informants' interpretations of evidence is offered.

The present thesis also follows, to some degree, the methodology that was used by Hofmeyr (1994). In her methodology, she combines three related areas, namely, oral story telling, literacy and oral historical narrative. Her starting point was to establish a link between Southern African historiography, the interpretation established by South African historiography, and oral narratives.

She attempts to reconstruct the history of the Ndebele-Sotho chiefdoms of an area called Mokopane or Valentyn close to Potgietersrus where she conducted her

research. Hofmeyr's central point is that oral and written accounts influence each other and interact with one another. She explores the influence of literacy as purveyed by missions and schools; the impact of colonialism; and the consequences of forced removal. At the same time, she attempts to convey a history of the community in which the research took place (*Ibid*).

The implication of the above is that oral history cannot retain its purity. It is important to recognise, in addition to all other elements described previously, the influence of extraneous influences, the importance of performance contexts, and the gendered nature of stories, and status of stories.

A recurrent problem pointed out in the theoretical literature is that the researcher becomes an audience (*Ibid*). Another problem is that the researcher may become a friend and confidant, and this raises problems for representation. Van Onselen (1996) cites some difficulties in his relationship with Kas Maine with whom a close relationship developed but whom he had to represent in a scholarly work. Whilst it is always likely that the presence of a stranger may alter the behaviour of those that are being observed, it also true that trust and a close relationship between the observer and the observed may affect the observation (*Ibid:* 10). Therefore, some prior information on the habits and practices of the observed by the observer is important to enable him/her to gauge whether the habits and practices s/he observes subsequently are improvised. Nevertheless, improvisations may be messages that the informants wish the researcher to project into the world, so it is illuminating to decode these even if they have been created for the moment.

Oral history as historical methodology should be employed with an acknowledgement that oral testimony, like other evidence, provides problems of corroboration and interpretation. Bozzoli (1991) highlights the difficulty of recording people's life histories, especially as an academic who has to deal with issues of privacy and respect. She relies on her research assistant to formulate some of the questions out of her familiarity with the subjects' background.

Bozzoli, as suggested above, also tries to work out what the relationship is between the broad social structures and forces and individual experiences as they are mediated through oral testimony. This continues to be a difficult methodological issue and one that confronts this thesis (*Ibid:* 4).

An example of other problems associated with oral interviews is cited from Peires' work. Peires (2003) principally worked with a published source that was published quite a long time after an event that is Gqoba in 1888 after the cattle killing that took place in the 1850's. In the list of oral sources that he worked with, he cites only twelve informants in his bibliography who gave him interviews in 1975 and 1976, and in 1982 and 1983. Many of these informants were interviewed in Kentani District and others in the Berlin and Willowvale Districts (Peires, 2003:454). What we need to know is how these informants were reacting to the events of their time (in the mid 1970's to 1980's in volatile South Africa), and how it affected the way they thought of the cattle killing more than a century before. Peires's political position should also be considered. He was an activist opposed to apartheid in the Eastern Cape during the time of the interviews. He has been quite thorough in thinking about how his engagement in the 1980s influenced his argument in the historical study, but has been less reflective concerning the political agendas of his informants on Gqoba. Peires agrees that the difficulty of writing about the cattle killing is that the primary sources are riddled with lies, both deliberate lies and self-delusions (*Ibid:* 11). Peires was an activist writing a historical work; he was determined to portray colonial rule and its agents as cruel and destructive, leaving a legacy of dispossession and misery for the 20$^{th}$ century. More recent debate and reflection on oral history points to the need for more contextualisation of the information that is 'transacted' in the kinds of interview situations in which he finds himself (*Ibid*).

In evaluating oral history, Keegan (1988) agrees that although human memory is given to error, misconception, elision, distortion, elaboration and downright fabrication, without it the study of contemporary history often lacks common touch and tends to remain a narrative of the doings of public men thereby making

history an account of events rather than a social analysis (*Ibid*: 162, 164). His observations suggest that there is value in the very fragility and malleability of human memory as it is relayed through oral testimony.

Another research methodology employed was the use of media information. Since the advent of democracy in South Africa (after 1994), the Rastafarian Movement has attracted the attention of the media, and the result of this is that more and more newspapers have become interested in covering the activities of the Movement. Although newspapers tend to provide information on specific areas around the country and may sensationalise news, they do throw some light on this topic since it is important to give a general overview on the existence and activities of Rastafarians in South Africa. As has been pointed out previously, some radio and television stations have started covering and reporting on the activities of Rastafarians and playing reggae music. Television stations report on Rastafarianism when there is a demonstration (such as for the legalisation of *ganja)*, appear in some religious programmes or during discussions and debates about topics touching Rastafarians. Information from the media helps measure the popularity and growth of the Movement. The media also expresses the position of civil society's attitude towards the Rastafarianism during debates and news that concern the Movement.

A lot of information was gathered in the form of video footage of dances and gatherings, photographs and audio recordings of proceedings, especially during *grounation.* There are some documents that Rastafarians use during *grounation,* original copies of some poems, and questionnaires, these are available in the William Cullen library at the University of the Witwatersrand.

## 3.2 Approach followed in this study

As indicated above, the approach followed in this thesis is the use of participant observation in addition to literature already discussed. Thus, part of this study is the culmination of three years of participant observation that entails detailed data

of my subjects, in their natural setting, taken and collected every Saturday, Sunday and other days when there were special occasions. One such natural setting is the gathering or congregation that takes place every Saturday between 12 o'clock and 6 o'clock generally known as *grounding* or *grounation.* In order to avoid altering the behaviour of my subjects as little as possible, I assumed the role of a passive observer by not bringing along any equipment like a recorder or a camera[11] nor did I take notes during my initial observation. The reason for this was to establish trust and the sense of a relationship. Having done so, the role was changed to that of the participant-as-observer, which involved actively participating in some of their activities, discussions (*reasoning*), and following them, wherever there was action. After a time, it became easy for me to record information and photographs during *grounation* without restriction.

For the most part primary literature includes that used during church services. These sources are, for example, poems, songs, the constitution, and guidelines of the Movement, and other publications that members bring. Most of these documents were in a poor state with pages missing. My willingness to organise and bind them made members prepared to bring along more documents. Using these primary sources, I attempt to answer the following questions: why are certain literary forms preferred, what images are prevalent, what traditions and sources do they refer to, and how they are performed? Answering these is important because of certain assumptions I had about what the primary literature can tell us concerning symbolism and performance. There is a need to identify dominant imagery and performance modes to assess the nature of Rastafarianism, especially as a variant of millenarianism or a particular socio-political movement. There is need to trace the 'history' of aspects of Rastafarianism, and how these have been transported from Jamaica to Daveyton.

However, the larger part of this work involves the analysis of information that has been obtained through field research, incorporating participant observation and oral interviews. Field research will assist in investigating meaning, including

[11] It should be noted that no camera is allowed on the *ground.*

culture and norms, practices involving behaviour, specific events, roles and positions, and relationships pertaining to behaviour found in a set of roles. This helps in understanding the nature of Rastafarianism, its hierarchy (if it has one), its characteristic norms, and how it is related to other forms of Rastafarianism and those of the wider society.

Oral interviews were used to obtain information on individual life stories of Rastafarians. Life histories of individuals reflect common experiences of members of the Movement and reveal aspects of experiences with other members of the society, authorities and social life. Each life story reflects something of the common experience of a larger Rastafarian membership. Each individual life story reveals aspects of the group's experience of the economic background, employment, level of education and general opinion on social and political conditions, especially after 1994.

Through observation, I was able to understand Rastafarians' organisational structure, cultural practices, attitudes, values, belief systems, rituals and other related activities, such as language usage, and the songs and poems sung and recited during congregation and specific ceremonies. Thus by participating and acquiring the habit of listening helped in understanding the Movement, while interpretations of songs and poems provided important information on the Rastafarian worldview. Adopting a habit of listening became necessary since during the process of *reasoning* (question and answer) most questions were asked and answered by Rastafarians. Interpretation of songs and poems entails explaining what a particular poem, song is about, or what its meaning is. Clarification was sought where descriptions and language were unclear.

As indicated earlier, acquiring permission to observe Rastafarians is difficult because of their nature as a closed society. When I told them that I came to conduct research they started to ask me questions about what the research was intended for. They made it clear that they did not want their activities to appear in the media because the information could be used to discredit them. Even after

assuring them that it was a doctoral study, they were not satisfied. They only agreed after one of the women proposed that they should grant me permission and that if I was there for some other reason God would deal with me. Knowing that they do not allow the use of tape recorders and cameras, it was not possible for me to use them in the early stages of my research. It was only after attending three sessions that I was sure they no longer saw me as a complete stranger and I started to use the equipment. Producing duplicates of photographs, which I gave them free of charge also made them willing to allow me to take more photographs. Being a reggae fan, my knowledge and interest in the history of blacks in the Diaspora, and the fact that I was a History lecturer eased my way, although it was not without suspicion. For most members it appeared as though the permission was granted in the belief that since I was a history lecturer, I was in turn going to help clarify some areas of African history, which they did not understand. In the process of observation, it became important for me to take part in most of their activities, which included singing, holding meetings and attending dances and other ceremonies.[12] I think what made it easy for me to get permission to conduct research was my prior readings on Rastafarianism because it made them think that there was something they could benefit from me.

Obtaining information during dances and funerals was not as difficult as it was during *grounation.* This is because these occasions are open for everybody to attend and it was easy to record and to photograph these proceedings without raising suspicion. Other events that I attended include regional gatherings. Getting information during these gatherings was sometimes difficult because Rastafarians from other houses regarded me with suspicion and sometimes those from Daveyton had to intervene and explain why I was there.

The social lives of Rastafarians were observed in an unrestricted atmosphere and not during congregation. Sundays are the busiest days in the lives of Rastafarians with more than one activity taking place. One important activity that attracts a large number of Rastafarians at a time is the dance. Other activities reserved for

[12] For my first encounter with members of the House of Fire, see Chapter 3.

Sunday are family gatherings, birthdays, weddings and sanctifications. Funerals also provided a good opportunity for my subjects to be observed in their natural setting. There are also special days of celebration such as the Visit of Selassie to Jamaica (21 April), Ethiopian Liberation Day (5th May), All African Liberation Day (25th May), Birthday of Selassie (23rd July), Birthday of Marcus Garvey (17th August) Ethiopian New Year (11th September), and Coronation Day (2nd November).

Participant observation helped in the identification and compilation of a list of possible informants, and facilitated the setting of appointments for interviews. Since I was present most of the time, it was easy for me to identify the most knowledgeable members during *reasoning* and single them out for interviews. This is not to downplay the role ordinary members with little knowledge about Rastafarianism; they are the ones who make *reasoning* possible by asking many questions. The interviews took two forms, namely, group and private or single interviews. Group interviews helped throw some light on the worldview of the Movement, while answer follow-up helped with questions that might arise from observations. A problem encountered when using this approach was that the same people tended to dominate discussions, while others contributed little or nothing. This problem was solved by conducting private interviews, which allowed those who could not express themselves public to be open when interviewed as individuals or away from groups. Private interviews and sometimes questionnaires were also used to acquire information on the general opinion, attitudes and feelings of civil society (which included members of various social groupings) about the Movement. In order to obtain a balanced view, people in general, teachers, high school learners (of Daveyton Senior Secondary) and university students (of the former Vista University, East Rand Campus in Daveyton) were requested to respond to the questionnaire.

Therefore, information collected, such as songs and poems, the Rastafarian Anthem, their creed, Psalms from the Holy Bible, and activities observed, such as dances, are interpreted and explained. Rastafarians themselves are an important

source of information since they are basic to this study. There is a valuable collection of documents owned by the *house*. These sources include *Jahug: Nyahbinghi Order Theocracy Reign,* the importance of which lies in the fact that the source contains guidelines upon which the *house* (Rastafarian Church) is grounded. The *Jahug* and the Bible are frequently used as a source of reference during *reasoning*. Other documents include 100 *chants* (Rastafarian hymns) and those that members bring along to be scrutinised during *reasoning*.

In order to provide a proper theoretical basis of the study it is important to define the meanings and nature of specific concepts that are relevant in order to establish the extent to which they are applicable to Rastafarianism. It is also essential to recognise that many of the definitions may be extremely fluid and open to contestation.

## 3.3 Exposition of Concepts

Central to this study are the concepts Rastafari, culture and identity. These can mean different things for different people and at different times, which is why it is necessary to explain and contextualise them. While it is easy to define and describe what Rastafari is, the same cannot be said of the concepts of culture and identity. Although the thesis focuses on identities, there is a close connection

between identity and culture. In order to understand what identity is, it is important to know what the concept of culture entails. The meanings of these have, from their inception, changed many times and by so doing further complicate their already complex meanings. For example, scholars, amongst others Raymond Williams (one of the founders of cultural studies) and Eagleton (2000) (writing as a post-modern anthropologist) agree that the concept of culture is one of the two or three most complex words in the English language. On the other hand, the difficulty of defining the concept of identity is due to its nature, that is, it is interdisciplinary. This means that attempts at understanding it have been made by scholars in different fields, ranging from anthropology, sociology,

psychology, philosophy, and literary studies to linguistics, each offering different perspectives.

### 3.3.1 Rastafari

The word Rastafari is derived from Haile Selassie's (the Ethiopian King) original name Ras (Ethiopian word for Prince) Tafari Makonnen who in 1930 was crowned as *His Imperial Majesty, King of Kings, Lords of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God, Light of this World, and King of Zion*. Haile Selassie was reported to be the 225th restorer of the Solomonic Dynasty and to represent the oldest throne on earth, more than three thousands years old (Napti, 2003:3). For the Jamaicans, the coronation reaffirmed the ancient roots of Ethiopia and its independent place in Judea-Christian religions (Chevannes, 1998b:9). Johnson-Hill supports this when he says:

> By identifying with the new Black king, the powerless become powerful. Because Selassie was a Black emperor of virtually the only African nation to successfully resist colonialism, he evoked Black Nationalist sentiments and provided hope for an eventual triumph over racism (Johnson-Hill, 1996:4).

The name Rastafari is literally derived from the Amharic language: Ras means "prince" and Tafari "Head Creator" (*Jahug*, 1992: 4). Ras Tafari was the birth name of His Imperial Majesty (H.I.M as he is called by Rastafarians) Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia, who is also the divinity of the Movement (Gondwe, 2002:9). Thus, Rastafari can be taken to refer first to Haile Selassie as head of the Movement. The word Rastafari also refers to the creed, religion, and Movement or organisation. When used within this context the word Rastafari is preferred as opposed to 'Rastafarianism' because it implies *ism* and *schism* (which in turn implies division), to which Rastafarians are strongly opposed (Bosch, 1996: 7). In this thesis, Rastafari is seen as a convergence of the heritage of the Maroons, Ethiopianism and the emergent Pan-African movement that culminated in Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) (*Ibid*). In another sense, the word Rastafari is used to refer to adherents as opposed to frequently used terms such as Rastas or Rastafarians, as one Rastafari clearly put it during *reasoning* that "His *followers* shall be called by his name." (*Observation*, 20th April

2002).[13] In short, the word Rastafari can be used to refer to either Haile Selassie, the Movement itself or to the adherents. It should be noted that in this study, however, the word Rastafari is used to refer to Haile Selassie, 'Rastafarians' to the adherents, and 'Rastafarianism' to the Movement, in order to avoid confusion.

### 3.3.2 Identity

Erikson first used identity as a concept in the clinical literature during the 1950s. He acknowledged that the concept was an extraordinarily elusive and slippery. Although he provided sensitive descriptions of various features of identity, he refused to commit himself to a precise definition, preferring to use the term in different senses to reflect the particular feature under discussion (Rosenberg, 1087: 194). In his attempt to define the concept, he acknowledged that the term covers much of what has been called the self, be it in the form of a self-concept, self-esteem, or in that of a fluctuating self-experience. For him, identity in its subjective aspect is the awareness of the fact that there is a selfsameness and continuity to the style of one's continuity (Hart, *et al*, 1987: 121-122).

Gecas and Mortimer (1987) not only attempt to define the concept but also try to explain how identities are formed. They show how the self and others interact to form identities. Identity, for them, "refers to who or what one is; to various meanings attached to oneself by self and others" (*Ibid:* 268). They distinguish several important types of identity, namely role-identity, character and existential identity. Role-identity refers to a structural feature of group membership to which individuals internalise and to which they become committed, for instance, various social roles, membership and social categories. Role-identities anchor the individual to social institutions and to various kinds of social networks, and in doing so often provide the ontological grounding or existential identity for the individual (*Ibid*).

[13] Rastafarians of Daveyton do not prefer to be called followers but to be called the children of Rastafari Selassie

On the other hand, basing his definition on the common idea held by post-modern scholars who see identity as multiple, fluid and adaptable, Sarup (1996) defines identity as follows:

> … a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings blend and clash. These writings consist of many quotations from the innumerable centres of culture, ideological state apparatus and practices: parents, family, schools, the work place, the media, the political parties, and the state. Human subjects have the capacity to work on these differences within an individual, who is never a unified member of a single unified group. Thus, an identity is not an object, which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each observer in each period (*Ibid: 25-26*).

Sarup thus sees identity as a combination of attributes arising from numerous sources that an individual or groups harness. The result of this is that instead of identity becoming unified and rigid, individuals and groups end up with multiple identities and allegiances. Identity also becomes elastic because it is drawn from different sources.

The definition of the concept identity is further complicated by its implication for both uniqueness and sameness. It suggests that a particular person is this one and the other, while it also maintains that this person may belong to several different groups. Rather than merely accept that identity can embrace a diversity of self and allegiances, Denis-Constant (1995) looks for a relationship between identities. He maintains that identity is:

> The utterance of differences considered as a system of relations; based on oppositions it creates however a ground for negotiation, for establishing a balance of power, because such an utterance is made possible by forgetting about conditions in which society and polity have actually been produced (*Ibid:* 2).

In broadening its meaning, Denis-Constant argues that the word cannot be defined in isolation. The only way to understand it is by contrasting it against other identities. In this way, it implies both uniqueness and sameness in the sense that it gets its meaning from what it is not, that is, from the others. Therefore, for identity to emerge and exist, it requires the presence of the other who is different from the self and with whom it establishes a relationship (*Ibid*).

The self is in a constant struggle to negotiate and reconcile itself in order to be an individual and a member of a group or of several groups at the same time. This arises from the fact that the self belongs to a particular culture, has an ideology, and follows certain practices that may be in direct contrast with those of the group. In his sense, identities as a result thrive on sameness and uniqueness. Thus, in its many and varied meanings, the word 'identity' may refer to

> the sameness and continuity; distinctiveness, uniqueness or separateness; group identification or ethnic identity; social role configurations; authenticity, essence or real self; situational; efficacy, volition or personal agency; stability of values and sense of life meaning; self-conception; the distinguishing character of an individual (Rosenberg, 1987:194).

This thesis discusses four forms: personal identity, group identity, social identity, and national identity. However, this categorisation may not be flexible enough as (see Denis-Constant) there are negotiations and shifts within these categories.

Personal identity emerges because of an individual's realisation that there exists a relationship between the self and the other. It is the relationship of belonging together and of alterity at the same time. Building on the work of Ricoeur, Denis-Constant (1995) distinguishes two aspects of personal identity: sameness and selfhood.

> He introduces in the concept of identity both the notion of continuity and that of the change and shows that continuity, in as far as it concerns the Self in its relation with the other, is meaningless without change or transformation. The sameness is built in the ideas of relations and of relations and encompasses continuity in time. The selfhood on the other is constituted by all the identification to which a person is consenting, and allowing for the possibility of evolution and change (*Ibid:* 3).

Here acquisition of identity is a positive development that should bring about changes to self. In shaping identities, much depends on the material resources available such as the linguistic aspects, the place where the narrative is spoken, and the medium used (*Ibid*; Sarup, 1996: 18). The question of individual or personal identity is very complex since it is always in the process of being constantly negotiated.

Groups are formed in order to preserve and protect the common identities of its members. A series of criteria can be used to define a group. These are language, religion, geographical location, race, occupational and social position, age or a combination of several criteria. Dennis-Constant (1995: 10) defines a group as a latent collectivity whose boundaries are drawn from one criterion or one set of criteria, and which seen from the angle of other criteria could appear extremely heterogeneous. In order for a group to become a community, its members need to acquire the feeling that they share something that makes them distinct from other groups in society, and that makes irrelevant other traits which could link them to those other groups, a feeling very often spurred on by the perception of a common threat or injustice. An organisation emerges in order to fight against threats or combat injustices, and organises its members into a movement with its own rules and its own hierarchy as well as to represent the group, and to speak in its own name (*Ibid:* 11). In this way, groups can be temporary, created to serve a particular purpose that ceases to exist thereafter. However, Rastafarianism is not a short-lived millenarian movement responding to immediate crisis.

Social identity is defined as the individual's knowledge that he or she belongs to certain social groups which has some emotional and value significance of the group membership, while a social group is two or more individuals who share a common social identification and perceive themselves to be members of the same social category (Hogg and Abrams, 1992: 7). Identity frequently acquires an ideological dimension, since it produces a theory on differences that very often drifts into legitimising the members of the social group at the expense of the non-members by showing hostility towards the non-members. By combining the figure of the other as a threat (real or not) and the ambition to affect the balance of power, social identities are used to mobilise against rather than for (Denis-Constant, 1985: 5). In the context of social identity, ethnic identity is seen as a "social imaginary" which divides various cultural groups into "imagined communities" by bonding them in literary and visual narrations located in territory, history and memory (Eagleton, 2000: 124). I will emphasise this aspect in this thesis.

National identity, which is the backdrop for an evaluation of social identity in this thesis, is fostered by either the state or media in support of the state, and is expressed in terms of national symbols, such as the national anthem and flag. Sometimes history is invoked or ancient times revived in support of national identities. Here, shared stories about national ethnic origins, past struggles and victories, the destiny of the nation and national heroes become important (Eaton, 2002: 51). As expected in the new democratic dispensation, the state requires its citizens to adopt a shared sense of nationhood as a prerequisite for its democratic and efficient functioning. The state cannot exercise peaceful authority over its citizens unless they perceive themselves to be members of a national collective, and are willing to make sacrifices for the good of the nation. National state sponsored identities also prevent divided societies from being torn apart by ethnic conflicts (*Ibid*: 46). National identity, however, influences other kinds of identity to be explored in this thesis.

The process of identity formation is as complex as the meaning of the concept itself. There are different explanations as to how and why identities are formed. There are two explanations of how identity is constructed, namely the traditional and the more recent account. Traditionally, identities were understood to be inherent qualities where it was taken for granted that people or groups have a given identities. The traditional view holds that all the dynamics, such as race, class, gender and ethnicity operate simultaneously to produce a coherent, unified, fixed identity (Sarup, 1996: 14).

Recent debates, as has been suggested above, assume that identities arise from people's interaction with others. The more recent view focuses on the process by which identities are constructed considering both psychological and social factors. According to this view, identities (both our own and those of others) become fragmented, full of contradictions and ambiguities. The process of labelling is one of the most important elements of identity construction, that is, when people start to attach certain labels to others, the labels often start to have an effect (*Ibid*). There is relationship between processes of labelling and the construction of

narratives. Therefore, the question of who one is, is mainly tied to narratives, which automatically construct a sense of time and space.

According to Denis-Constant (1995), people always have a choice between different identities. 'Identity is acquired not only in theory but also in relation to a given place and time' (*Ibid:* 15). He identifies three main pillars of identity narratives, namely identity constructed in relation to the past, space and culture. In order to construct identities, people must have strong roots in the past. Such people must be shown to have existed as a group for a long time and to have played a gallant role in history. History, liberating amnesia and imagination together contribute to choosing how and what is to be remembered or forgotten. Traumatic events of the past may explain and legitimate contemporary attitudes and behaviours (*Ibid:* 7). Space appears as the place where the necessities of life are available:

> where the communities are able to sustain and reproduce themselves, and have been doing so for a long time. It also appears as a place where some forms of sociability prevail, where some habits are the indispensable ingredients of a good life, and finally as a place, where certain people exercise power in a certain form. Therefore, conflict may arise whenever a discrepancy is felt between the space of power and the socio-cultural space: when a group tends to consider that the space is his while, others govern it (*Ibid*).

Identity construction is also influenced by cultural exchange. In spite of distance, misunderstanding and violence, people end up exchanging what they have and what they know and by doing so open up a not-completely-free choice of identity. Identity narratives imply a selection of pre-existing cultural traits, which will be transformed into emblems of identity, and they change cultures by selecting from a range of cultural traits and transforming their internal structures (*Ibid*: 8).

Perhaps the most acceptable argument is the one that holds that identities by themselves do not exist, that they are constructed in an attempt to lock up human groups within some boundaries in order to mobilise them against the different other. Field research undertaken in different parts of the world shows that identities are also constructed in order to create and mobilise certain people or groups towards the attainment of particular goals. Because of a particular history

that they supposedly share, some people tend to consider themselves to belong to one solid, immutable human entity, and consequently to be bound to act and react as a group whenever they feel ill-treated or threatened by the other (*Ibid*: 1).

The view that identities do not exist as predetermined entities is shared by Manganyi; who argues that both individuals as well as nations become preoccupied with distinctiveness during moments of crisis in a life history. Identity for him is an attribute of either individual or groups that thrives on exclusion. For example, an individual whose is well articulated must necessarily lose some of his appreciation for the value of others since his distinctiveness thrives on exclusion (Manganyi, 1981: 65-66). In spite of this line of thinking, Manganyi proposes that for the purpose of constructing, exploration and consolidation of a national identity, there should be a new language with a new meaning in the post- apartheid South Africa (that is, Africanisation sometimes called Afrocentrism) (*Ibid*: 69-70). Africanisation is taken to mean that the traditional African identity should be revived and protected. There is thus, he seems to be saying, some inherent essence and some consensus around what is uniquely African. Although not an issue explored in this study, some consensus may emerge about what it is to be an African – something that cuts across class and ethnic lines.

### 3.3.3 Culture

Culture has its roots in the practice of careful attention to the gods who were cultivated in invocation and ceremonies connected with the land in order to ward off their anger and invite their blessing, for instance, the cult of the god of ploughing and planting, the source of agriculture, which literally means "the culture of fields" (Caws, 371-372). It is helpful to note the period during which the concept was defined and the context within which it was defined. These were the early years of the emergence of anthropology as a discipline, during which European culture was seen to be the only high culture. The British anthropologist Tylor (1871) gave one of the oldest definitions of culture as:

> That complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, morals, law, customs, and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (*Ibid:* 4).

The above definition implies that culture is something that is inculcated. According to Raymond Williams, the concept includes:

> The organisation of production, the structure of the family, the structures of institutions, which express or govern social relationships, the characteristics form through which members of the community communicate (Caws, 1994: 5).

Here culture is much more about the mechanism of social reproduction. What is important in these definitions is that culture is the product of an individual's interaction with the environment or society under which he or she exists. Ayasi (1992) supports this understanding of culture which

> is a sum total of the material and intellectual equipment whereby people satisfy their biological and social needs and adapt themselves to their environment (*Ibid:* 14).

Ayasi argues that although culture is transmitted from generation to generation, it should represent the collective consciousness of a group of people, and it should be generally accepted and fit into the normative system of that group. What is also important is that 'culture' should not be seen as static and unchanging but will always change together with the normative system of the group (*Ibid*). Observe its association with morality.

The meaning of the concept 'culture' has undergone several changes owing to increased contact between cultures. Malinowski (writing in the early twenties) spoke of culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs and all other capabilities and habits acquired by 'man' as a member of society. Malinowski was the first European anthropologist to make a sustained argument that non-European people were not just mindless savages, but that everything in their rituals and customs had a rational function (Ayisi 1992: 15). Even though Malinowski is criticised today because he supported 'benevolent' colonialism, his contribution to the study of 'culture' was very important because of his broad understanding of it. In the post-modern period,

the term has been broadened to include not only other cultures but also other aspects of the concept not originally covered (*Ibid).* Writing in the post-modern period, Hall[14] and Jefferson (1998) defines the culture of a group as a:

> way of life of the group or class, the meanings, values and ideas embodied in institutions, in social relations, in systems of beliefs, in mores and customs, in the use of objects and material life…it includes maps of meaning which are reflected in the patterns of social organisation and relationship through which an individual becomes a social individual…it is the way the social relations of a group are structured and shaped: but it is also the way those shapes are experienced, understood and interpreted (Bennet,1998:23).

Thus, culture may also be about decoding and giving meaning to life. Writing in post-apartheid South Africa, van der Walt (1997) includes in his definition of culture, habits, customs, social organisations, techniques, language, values, norms, ideas and beliefs and classifies culture into five basic components:

a) The *worldviewish* aspect (a philosophical core of a culture), which provides a view of the whole of reality.
b) The *socia*l part, which entails language, institutions, laws and economic relationships.
c) The *material* side, which includes tools, machines and buildings.
d) The *behavioural* dimension, namely the concrete way of life, peculiar habits and customs of a specific culture.
e) The *religious* aspect, which is the deepest core of culture (*Ibid*: 9*)*.

After 1994, the state manipulated the value and normative aspect of culture by appealing to its citizens' sentimental attachment to the idea of culture. New 'cultures' such as the culture of learning and the culture of tolerance were invented and attempts made to instil these in South Africans. The articulation of these cultures was intended to counter negative subcultures such as those of conflict, violence, abuse, crime and legacy of educational neglect, which are serious problems in post-apartheid South Africa. Furthermore, subcultures, which were suppressed during apartheid, re-emerged. The Rastafarian movement may be seen as an example; hence, the need to describe subcultures.

[14] Stuart Hall, a Marxist sociologist and perhaps the most canonized of the founding fathers of cultural studies, contributed a great deal in cultural studies.

The question remains: Does Rastafarianism fit into current definitions of subculture?

According to Huq (2006: 9), the concept of subculture has a very long history. For him, the concept was developed during the 1950's in the United States of America by the Chicago School of urban gang sociology and later refashioned in the 1970s by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies of Birmingham University. Subcultures naturally constitute a breakaway culture from the mainstream social system or 'culture'. Outsiders generally view them negatively because their norms, values and practices are an antithesis of what are defined as society's expectations.

The meaning of the concept of subculture underwent numerous shifts from the 1950's when the word was first coined; yet, scholars agree that:

> Subcultures are groups of people that have something in common with each other (i.e. they share a problem, an interest, a practice) which distinguish them in a significant way from the members of the main social group (Thornton, 1997:1).

Thornton also maintains that subcultures are a subdivision of a national or mainstream culture, and are composed of a combination of identifiable social situations such as class, status, ethnic background, regional and rural or urban residence, and religious affiliation, but forming in their combination a functioning unity that has an integrated impact on the participating individual (Gordon in Thornton, 1997: 41-42).

Cohen (1997: 51) traces the origin of subcultures to the attempt by individuals wishing to solve a status problem. These individuals, he maintains, gravitate towards one another and jointly establish new norms, new criteria of status that define as creditable the characteristics they possess, the kind of conduct of which they are capable. Cohen continues to say that such new status criteria would represent new subcultural values different from or even antithetical to those of a larger social system.

In his study of the *Tsotsi* gangs of the Witwatersrand as a youth subculture, Glaser sees subcultures as resulting from a rage at a social status quo that marginalised and subordinated them. Their (rage) was directed at the dominant classes and parents (Glaser 2000:7). This, he argues, is shown by the choice of style which in some way mocks the establishment and inverts its values. In order to protect their realm of power and status, subcultures insulate themselves from the outside world and create exclusivity through dress codes and language (*Ibid:* 7-8*)*.

Hebdige (1997) sees subcultural origins in the form of the youth protest movement in Britain. Subcultures, according to him, were at first conceived to be an unnatural break, interference in the orderly sequence and a violation of authorised codes with the power to provoke and disturb. As can be deduced from the above authors, definitions of subculture are quite inflexible in that they tend to be associated very much with youth and a stage of rebellion before maturity. Rastafarianism does not fit in with this classification, since it is a product of post colony that relates to the old metropolis, but also embraces mature members and the youth. The Movement also envisages itself in a permanent and not a temporary state of rebellion. Its practices are embedded in a sense of long-term evolution and a hierarchy based on knowledge and ability to reason, rather than on fighting ability or charisma. Rastafarianism does not threaten real violence because it espouses a philosophy of non-violence. Hebdige is, however, of the opinion that subcultures can and have been incorporated into the mainstream culture in two forms, namely, the commodity form, which entails the conversion of subcultural signs into mass-produced objects, and the ideological form comprising the labelling and redefinition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups like the police, the media and the judiciary (*Ibid:* 131).

It is important to take note of the African context of the debates around culture and identities as a 'post colony' rather than a postcolonial idea. The debate on cultural differences and identities became extensive after Africa became independent. African scholars started to argue that colonialism was the

authentication of the superiority of European culture and the certification of colonial identity. As a result, new cultures emerged and multiple identities were mobilised owing to the desire to counter Western culture. In this study, the idea of multiple identities is used to describe patterns of cultural resistance. Werbner (1989) suggests that:

> The post colony is made up not of one coherent public space, nor is it determined by any single organising principle. It is rather a plurality of spheres and arenas, each having its own separate logic yet nonetheless liable to be entangled with other logics when operating in certain specific contexts: hence, the postcolonial subject has had to learn to continuously bargain and improvise. Faced with this, the postcolonial subject mobilised not just a single identity, but also several fluid identities, which by their very nature, must be constantly revised in order to achieve maximum instrumentality and efficacy as and when, required (*Ibid:* 1).

Rastafarianism, as a product of the post colony, as it will be argued, constitutes one of the several fluid identities referred to above (reflecting Western culture in religion and African legacies in politics), and arising from a number of spheres and arenas such as the colonial, political, social, religious and economic spheres.

Prior to 1994, national identities in South Africa were based on the ideology of racial separation where the country's national symbols only represented whites. In addition, the official history of the country portrayed whites positively and blacks negatively. Blacks, as a result, could not identify with the 'national' symbols and Afrikaner heroes. 'National' identity was the preserve of whites only. With this long history of racial conflict and oppression, the country was left with a legacy of heroes that the post-apartheid generation is unable to identify with across cultural and racial lines (Manganyi, 1997: 67).

In an attempt to build a new South African culture and identity the latter has become one of the most important ideological tools today; hence, discourses such as 'nation building', supported by Nelson Mandela, the South African Broadcasting Cooperation's 'Semunye' slogan or the idea of the 'Rainbow Nation' as popularised by Desmond Tutu – but less popular now. However, debates on 'cultural unity' and 'cultural diversity' have become common place.

> In earlier times the apartheid policies defined us, determined what we would and also with whom we could have contact. As a result of this our cultural identities were defined in terms of skin colour rather than the person. Our responsibility today is to redefine ourselves, and personally determine whom we would like to have contact with. Furthermore, we also realise that the cultural differences are not merely skin-deep (van der Welt, 1997: 97).

The changing of the National Flag and the Anthem was an attempt to undo the situation created by apartheid, as Eaton has put it:

> It is therefore not surprising that South African national identity was a hotly debated topic during the period 1990 to 1996. Despite the various positions taken, there seemed to be a general consensus among lay people, politicians and intellectuals that the country lacked a cohesive, commonly accepted national identity, and that South Africans therefore did not have a sense of unified nationhood (Eaton, 2002: 45).

The problem with multiculturalism is that it generally operates from the position of a dominant culture, making concessions to 'minority' cultures. Multiculturalism refers to an order of instruction concerned with a dominant culture which is defined as "other" or "different" - usually minor and inferior as well - in such a way that it challenges that which the dominant culture has defined as familiar, major and superior (*Ibid:* 374).

Thus, the government together with the media have taken upon themselves to build a new nation with one 'national identity' and foster 'cultural unity'. Due to the diverse nature of our society and our culture, and to deep inequalities of power left by apartheid, this proves to be a difficult task because it actually assigns greater value to particular cultures and languages, which are masked by the apparent concession to diversity. The slogan 'Rainbow Nation' also highlights a difficulty because of its image of many colours in one rainbow, or many cultures in one nation, which presupposes a stable relationship between diversity and unity. Diversity and unity are posed as complementary, (as in 'unity in diversity') where differences are experienced as an opportunity rather than an embarrassment (*Ibid:* 163-164). Multiculturalism implies that diverse 'races' are living in pluralistic harmony. Multiculturalism views different cultures in terms of how different they are from 'Anglo' culture, not on their

own terms, a view that takes race as a real base for identity (Sardar and Loon, 1999: 123).

## 3.4 Conclusion

This study attempts to document contemporary history, based on two major research methodologies, namely, participant observation and oral interviewing. Participant observation is captured and interpreted through activities, actions, expressions and responses of my subjects. As this study will demonstrate, interpretation conducted based on oral interviews are important in establishing the nature of Rastafarian belief system, opinion and most important in the case of this study, their life experiences.

Central concepts to the study are Rastafari, identity and culture. It has been argued in this chapter that there are many complex debates among scholars about the meanings of identity and culture. I prefer definitions that stress that identity arising from numerous sources, and that there are multiple identities that are negotiable in the context of the post colony. I address the issues of identity against the backdrop of the South African state that promotes the concept of a particular kind of national identity, (one nation; many cultures) which, despite rhetoric that may suggest otherwise, actually gives the highest value to Anglo-derived language and culture.

Rastafarianism, I argue, does not really fit into the standard definitions of 'subculture' mainly because it is not a threat to the dominant culture (except rhetorically). It is ironic that while Rastafarians claim to express a primary Africaness (which is understood as having roots in non-colonised Africa), they tend to reject key elements of African culture, including religious beliefs. Rastafarians want to see Africa not bound by ethnic categories as other groupings often are.

I will argue that Rastafarians, as a group, are in a constant process of making and remaking their own unique identity, which constitutes what may be described, with some qualifications, as a cultural (in some senses a subcultural) group. Their identity and cultural traits developed and are developing under specific social, economic and political conditions in the period before and after 1994.

The next chapter investigates how the prevailing conditions in Daveyton shaped their identity and influenced their emergence as an organisation or organisations that are not entirely homogeneous. To begin with, I will discuss the establishment of the Township of Daveyton and the extent to which residents were satisfied or dissatisfied with the services following its establishment.

# CHAPTER FOUR

## The Establishment of Daveyton and Origin of Rastafarian Movement

This chapter focuses on the emergence of the Rastafarian movement in the township of Daveyton. Its intention is to investigate the relationship between the prevailing social conditions (particularly the lack of housing), and between poverty and unemployment, and the emergence of Rastafarianism. Rastafarianism as an organised movement originated in the new informal settlement called Maphupheni, which means dreamland in 1998. Having moved from Daveyton where conditions were deplorable, residents of Maphupheni expected that the place would be better. This chapter will show that conditions in Maphupheni could have contributed to the emergence of Rastafarianism in contrast to Daveyton or other parts.

This chapter is the result of an integration of both primary and secondary sources, although it is based mainly on primary literature, except for some secondary literature on Daveyton. Information on the origin of Rastafarianism is based on primary sources, which is integrated with information obtained through oral interviews. Oral interviews took different forms, ranging from person-to-person, and group interviews to formal and informal discussions. Information on life histories was gathered mainly through interviews with individual Rastafarians.

It is intended to provide important information on the establishment of the township of Daveyton, which in turn gives a background from which the Movement emerged, and investigates how it emerged. An understanding of the prevailing conditions in Daveyton assists in establishing where adherents of the Movement are concentrated and why this is so.

## 4.1 The Establishment of Daveyton

The 'problem' of African urbanisation and how best to house and control blacks in urban areas, long predates the apartheid era and had been an integral part of political debates. From 1948, the government implemented a distinctive approach represented by the establishment of Daveyton as 'model' township with very particular ideological intentions concerning the control of the urban black population.

The urbanisation policy of the Nationalist Party was the result of the Sauer Commission 1948[15] which recommended measures that would slow down and eventually reverse the movement of blacks into white areas. Blacks were not considered permanent residents in the urban areas and that is the reason townships were from their inception scenes of intense conflict between residents and the government (Mashabela, 1988:1; Malinga, 1997:122). Although the main cause of the conflict could be found in the apartheid policies of the government, the conflict had been partly prompted by township residents' material grievances, where poor facilities, severe housing shortages and widespread unemployment were constant features (Mashabela, 1988:1). These townships were all similar in that they were, in the words of the then Minister of Native Affairs, Hendrik Verwoerd, "European owned property and the native who reside there reside just as native labourers live on the farm of a European owner," (Malinga: 1997: 12). With all these social problems as well as the government's intention to create townships to serve its own interests, conditions in Daveyton were conducive to any form of protest action, in spite of the government's attempts to establish a showcase black township.

Daveyton came into being because of concern expressed by government authorities over the proliferation of informal settlements in the towns of the Witwatersrand. Compared to other towns on the East Rand, Benoni had the

[15] This commission was headed by Paul Sauer and it was to investigate and formulate a new policy for the control of blacks.

largest number of people inhabiting the Apex[16] informal settlement. Thus, in 1954, the aim of the Benoni Town Council was to eliminate squatting and overcrowding by removing about 20.000 residents from Apex (Nieftagodien, 2001:166). What makes the establishment of Daveyton unique is that its planning coincided with the work of the Mentz Committee[17], and planners incorporated its recommendations centrally in their plans for its establishment. The Town Council of Benoni enjoyed a good working relationship[18] (facilitated by the Director of Non-European Department, J E Mathewson) with the central government, unlike other townships on the East Rand. This explains the speed with which Daveyton was established. The government used the development of Daveyton as an example to the rest of the country of how the housing problem could be solved (Nieftagodien, 2001: 151-152).

The township of Daveyton was established in 1955. Five government officials played a major role in its establishment. These were Dr. Eiselen (Secretary of Native Affairs), Mr. Heald (under Secretary for Native Affairs, urban areas), Mr. Turton (Principal Urban Areas Commissioner, labour), and Mr. Mocke (Urban Areas Commissioner housing) (Malinga, 1997: 79). Other local officials also participated in its establishment and development. The first and most important was W A Davey after whom the township was named. Davey, who was to become Daveyton's first administrator, played a role in its establishment by making sure that the project and plans for its construction were accepted. Another important figure was J E Mathewson who was the manager of the Benoni Council and later director of Non European Affairs (*Ibid:* 53, 54). The other two important personalities were Shadrack Sinaba and Tom Boya[19] who became

[16] Apex is in some books known as Etwatwa or Old Benoni Location.
[17] The Mentz Committee was set to investigate/make recommendations concerning the housing of blacks.
[18] The relationship that existed between Benoni and the Nationalist Party government was an unexpected one because Benoni was under the control of the conservative United Party administrators. Other towns on the East Rand such as Boksburg and Brakpan, which were pro-Nationalist, did not enjoy good relations with the government. The reason for this is that both Boksburg and Brakpan had tightened influx control regulations and did not experience the problem of informal settlement to the same extent, as did Benoni. The two towns thus lagged behind in the establishment of new townships.
[19] Sinaba stadium was named after Shadrack Sinaba while Boya's View extension for the middle income earners was named after Tom Boya.

important in the 1980s when local authorities were remodelled. Their role in the development of Daveyton will be discussed later.

Daveyton is about 12 kilometres[20] on the eastern side of the town of Benoni on the East Rand. Its establishment was the result of the government's policy of forced removal and of providing separate residential areas for blacks and whites. The aim behind its establishment was to accommodate people who were to be removed from Apex informal settlement. Apex, which was declared an emergency camp, was seen to be encircled by industries with no available land for future expansion (Malinga, 1997: 29, 63). The reason behind the relocation, however, was that Apex was situated very close to Benoni and was not in line with government policy of settling blacks close to towns meant for whites. The Geduld branch of the Nationalist Party in Springs and the white residents of the surrounding areas objected to the creation of a 'black spot' in their area because it would devalue their properties (Nieftagodien, 2001: 164). However, the first reason for the relocation does not hold because Apex (which became Actonville) was later allocated to Indians with no consideration of land for future expansion.

Notice that the problem of housing, influx control and unemployment has been a burning issue for the Benoni Town Council as early as the late 1940's to the 50's. By the middle of 1950, the Council was faced with a gigantic movement of squatters to the land east of Benoni and within ten months, its population had swelled to a staggering 18 000 (Bonner, 1998: 339). Massive youth unemployment also existed in Benoni. By 1951, there were 6 000 unemployed youths in Benoni (*Ibid:* 401).

As has been suggested previously, Daveyton, from its inception was envisaged as a modern township and a showcase by the National Party government to prove that it was capable of providing housing for blacks. This fitted in with an international movement (garden cities) to establish towns that would make their inhabitants into better citizens. The rationale behind this was that a pleasant

[20] The Township of Daveyton was established far away from Benoni so that it could easily be integrated into a homeland should the necessity arise.

environment would have a logical impact on inhabitants. The government made sure that the planning and establishment of Daveyton was different from other townships. Unlike Westville, (another township in Benoni) which was encircled by an industrial area and white residential areas, Daveyton was established on the outskirts away from Benoni and its surrounding industries. This in the future would have serious economic implications for residents because they had to pay for transport to work or to town, unlike those from Wattville and Actonville who did not stay far away. The government claimed that by doing this, it wanted to avoid a repetition of what happened in the Western areas of Johannesburg where the residents had to be resettled at great cost and inconvenience in Meadowlands and Diepkloof (Malinga, 1997: 63).

Great care was thus taken in the planning of Daveyton. According to the plan, the township had to accommodate about 40 000 inhabitants in 8 000 houses and it was to be the cleanest in South Africa (*Ibid*). Unlike other townships of the East Rand where the bucket system was used as a temporary measure, both water and sewerage reticulations were to be provided from the outset. All main roads were to be tarred (Mashabela, 1988: 52). The result of this was that Daveyton became attractive to people looking for a decent place to stay. However, the influx of homeless people who were eventually to build shacks constrained the provision of services. For example, the water and sewerage supply systems were no longer adequate. By the 1987/88 financial year, they needed upgrading to cope with the demand (*Ibid*).

In their plan, local authorities paid detailed attention to the ethnic division of Daveyton. Surveys were conducted and statistics compiled of the ethnic composition of Apex and this information was used to divide the new township ethnically. In this way, Daveyton became the first township to comply with the Group Areas Act (1950). Expressed in percentage terms, the township was divided as follows: 50% Nguni, 40% Sotho and 10% other (Nieftagodien, 2001: 161-162).

Accordingly, Daveyton became divided into eight distinctly separate areas wherein the Xhosa, Zulu, Swazi and Ndebele were grouped together with small buffer zones separating them. The Shangaan/Tsonga and Venda speaking inhabitants are clubbed together in one area demarcated by streets. The Northern, Southern and Western Sotho stayed in an area also separated by streets. The main purpose of ethnic zoning, according to Nieftagodien, was to impose tribal authorities and to enhance their influence and authority among the urban populace (*Ibid:* 159). In defending this ethnic differentiation, Mathewson used the government's argument that this was meant to avoid detribalisation and promote mother tongue instruction (Malinga, 1997: 59).

As a result, Daveyton became divided into three areas, namely, Area One for occupation by Shangaan/Tsonga and Venda speaking groups. Area Two for Nguni and Three for the Sotho group (*Ibid: 59, 63*). These sections were called after the group occupying it, for example, *emaShanganini* or *Basothong*, which literally means, "Where the Shangaan or Sotho speakers stay". Observe that ethnic division was carried out primarily for political reasons, the Tsonga/Venda, and Swazi/Ndebele, for example, were grouped together irrespective of the fact that they have little or no common cultural or political history.

The success of the ethnic division of Daveyton is expressed in Benoni's official history namely:

> By grouping the population on an ethnic basis each Bantu Councillor together with his Ward Committee, is able effectively to represent his ward in matters of day-to-day administration. It appears also to have reduced the incidence of such widespread social problems as tsotsi-ism and illegitimacy, and improve family cohesion… ethnic grouping has exerted a positive beneficial influence on family life in Daveyton and has contributed materially to the happiness and contentment of the community (Nieftagodien, 2001: 163).

The above is a reflection of contemporary views about what caused 'social problems'. In spite of the celebrated success of ethnic division, the policy was bound to facilitate ethnic mobilisation. Nieftagodien observes that the residents of the Apex for years had lived in an integrated environment without ethnic clashes, that the argument by the government that ethnic division was meant to prevent

ethnic conflicts and social problems was not valid (*Ibid*). In implementing ethnic division, residents were not consulted to get their opinion. The result of the implementation of this policy became evident when between December 1956 and March 1957, there were reports of sporadic clashes between youth from the Xhosa and Swazi/Ndebele areas that resulted in a number of deaths and injuries (*Ibid:* 160-161). Recounting the incident:

> Lesiba Makhafola recalled how the feud claimed the lives of about 20 people. He said relations between Xhosa-speaking residents and their Swazi and Ndebele fellow residents turned nasty and several streets became 'no go' areas (Sowetan, 26 April 2005).

Daveyton's success as a model township also lay in the ability of its administrators to provide infrastructures such as community and social centres, recreation grounds, an old age home, crèches, water supply, sanitation and electricity. These infrastructural developments continued through the early 1970's and by 1975 Daveyton was the only black township that was fully electrified (Malinga, 1997: 88). However, as suggested above, these developments together with the pace of provision of housing could not match the pressure of population increase. The problem of lack of housing continued into the 1980's when elected town councils replaced Non European Affairs Departments.

Daveyton achieved municipal status in 1983, the new Town Council was inaugurated in January 1984 under the Daveyton Peoples Party under the leadership of Tom Boya – its first mayor. His opponent in the elections was Shadrack Sinaba and his Sinaba Party (Mashabela, 1988:48). Boya took up his new post with great enthusiasm that rekindled new hopes for houses amongst the homeless. His popularity was evident by the support he enjoyed during elections when other townships on the East Rand were marred by boycotts.

> In this township, support for the council seems to stem from residents' perception that the council - and in particular, the mayor, Mr Tom Boya - has challenged the government on national political issues and is also committed to meeting the needs of the homeless, partly by allowing informal housing. Even here, however, residents complain that housing is being erected by private developers at prices that they cannot afford (*Ibid:* 7).

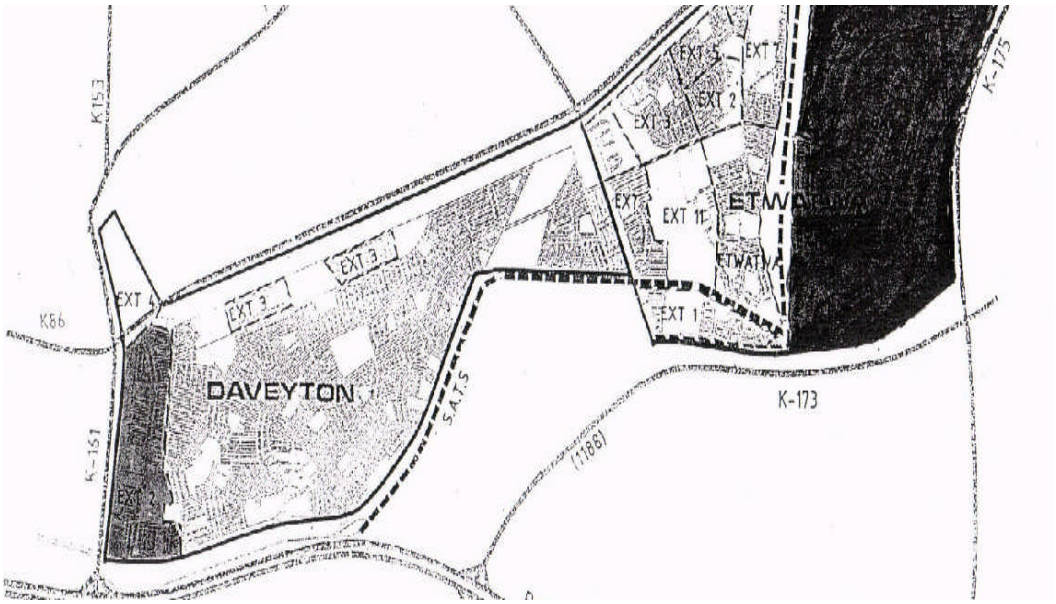
Boya's attempts to deliver services were undermined by supporters of the Sinaba Party who erected shacks either in backyards or on the boundaries of the township in protest at the lack of housing. Sinaba's support was limited to squatters and the poorer or more overcrowded sections. Pressure exerted on the council by the homeless resulted in the resignation of Boya in 1988 who cited the unpopularity and limited powers of the council as his reasons (*Ibid:* 106). This was true because all local authorities were faced with the problem of credibility. Many residents saw councillors as puppets of the government, powerless bodies and corrupt individuals, which led to boycotting elections.

Until the early 1980's Daveyton was reputed to be the cleanest township in the country but in recent times it has the unsavoury tag of being the first township on the East Rand to have an informal settlement or as they were known then, 'squatters' and 'backyard shacks'. Both Sinaba and Boya tried to win popular support by adopting populist stances with regard to residents' demands. In his doctoral thesis, Seekings writes:

> Over the following decade, councillor Sinaba was a constant thorn in the side of the Daveyton Council and the East Rand Administration Board (Erab). He championed the claims of squatters and backyard shack residents, vocally condemned local state policies, and marshalled opposition to rent increases. He retained substantial local support and earned the respect of his ANC aligned critics. In 1979 he attacked Piet Koornhof the then Minister of Co-operation and Development over false promises (Sowetan, 6 May 2003).

As a result, Erab blamed Sinaba for the succession of protests that took place between 1979 and 1985 over the council and Erab's policy of demolishing shacks. On the other hand, Tom Boya regarded Nelson Mandela and the ANC as the legitimate national leadership and criticised Erab over township councils' powers and resources (*Ibid*). This also highlights the problem of the increasing population and the inability of the local government to provide adequate housing. Besides the problem of lack of housing was that of increasing rent and forced removal. Between 1978 and 1984, township authorities became unpopular for increasing rents and evicting rent defaulters and squatters while not providing sufficient new housing, development or services (*Ibid*). By January 1988, residents owed the

Town Council R1, 8m in rent arrears, which was, according to Mashabela, a result of inability to pay rather than an organised boycott (Mashabela, 1988: 53).




**Map 1**: Map of Daveyton in 1998. Extension 1, 2 and 3, Old Daveyton and Etwatwa. This map shows how the township looked like after the creation of two new settlements.[21]

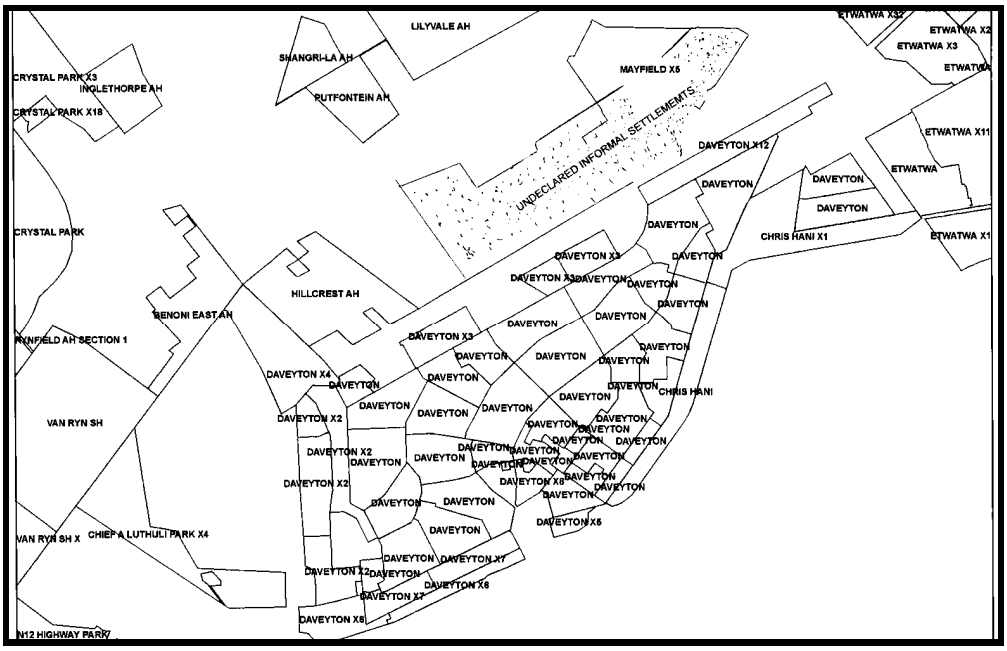
Owing to the shortage of houses and an increase in population, the local authority regulated the establishment of settlements for middle and low-income groups during the early 1970s. This led to the expansion of the township. Extension 1, 2 and 3 were developed during the 70s and 80s, and they provided subsidised housing for black civil servants, doctors, lawyers and businesspersons. The poor and unemployed were catered for by the creation of Etwatwa West, extension 4, 9 and 10, Etwatwa East extension 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 to 15 (see maps on the next page) which were the result of invasion without proper planning. This in general meant that like other townships, Daveyton was divided into three parts. These were the old and new that consist of modern houses for the middle and informal settlement for low-income earners. As is to be shown later, it was here that a group young people were to start their families (*Ibid*).

[21] Greater Benoni City Council: *Greater Benoni Spatial Development Framework*, March 1998.

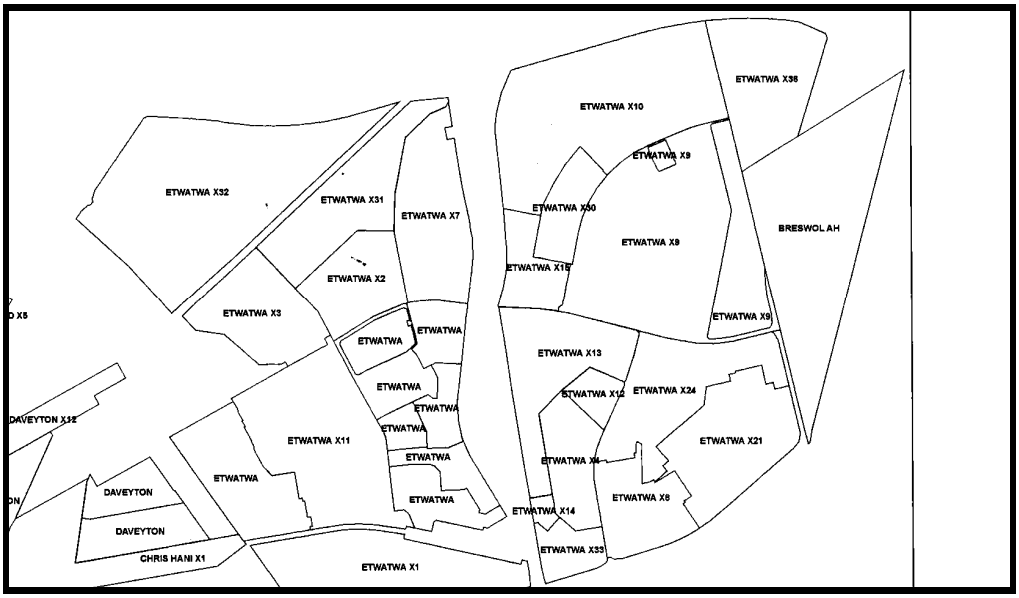



**Map 2:** Etwatwa in 1998. The map shows the division of the new settlement called Etwatwa.

As the problem of lack of housing became more acute from 1994, into the democratic period more and more new settlements were established through both formal and informal means. Legally, new settlements came into existence as the result of the government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (referred to as RDP houses). These new settlements of Cloverdene (sometimes known as King Lithuli) and Kingsway, are meant for low-income earners or the unemployed, and can be seen as government's attempt to provide housing for the poor. In a way, this is a continuity of the apartheid government's attempts to solve the problem of the shortage of housing, which failed and the problems persist into the present.




**Map 3:** Map of Daveyton in 2006. The map shows informal settlements that have not been officially declared by the local authorities where marked with black dots. [22]




**Map 4:** Etwatwa new extension by the 2006.[23]

The most important feature of Daveyton after 1994 was the emergence of informal settlements. The community is faced, like other townships in the East

[22] Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality: *Eastern District Spatial Development Framework*, March 2006.
[23] *Ibid*.

Rand, with a high unemployment rate and as a result, poverty and lack of proper housing has become a crisis that can be measured by an ever-increasing population that in turn resulted in the mushrooming of new informal settlements with inadequate facilities. Inhabitants of the new informal settlements known as Barcelona[24], Gabon and Zenzele (meaning do it yourself) all of which are underdeveloped (Malinga 1997: 109), were desperate people who invaded and occupied land, most of whom came from the old Daveyton township. By 1997, the housing shortage stood at 5 539 houses and the number was continually increasing (*Ibid:* 111).

The integration of Daveyton into the Greater Benoni Town Council by the Proclamation of Greater Benoni and the creation of the Greater Ekurhuleni Metro in 2002 did not deliver the expected housing and services. In spite of projects such as *Masakhane* (a government initiative meant to encourage people to work together by helping each other) implemented in the informal settlements under community leaders, the problem of shortage of housing remains, as more and more new settlements continue to emerge (*Ibid*).

Mathewson's dream that Daveyton would become a 'garden city' was overshadowed by the problem of inadequate housing, low income and high unemployment levels. From its inception, the provision of housing in Daveyton could not match its ever-increasing population. Between 1961 and 1982 Daveyton's population doubled but its housing stock grew by only one third (*Ibid*). In 1979 nearly 4 000 families had been on the official waiting list for at least four years. In 1983 there were 95 000 people which was beyond the projected 80 000. In 1995 the number grew to 151 000 occupying about 15 589 formal and 13 938 informal housing, and the number grew to 394 431 in 1997 including Etwatwa (see Table 1 and Figure 1 on the next page). By early 2000 the Daveyton/Etwatwa area needed about 70 000 houses yet only 5000 units were built (Malinga and Verhoef, 2000: 19).

[24] Chris Hani was named in honour of the assassinated Communist Party leader and Barcelona after the Olympics of 1992.

In 2002, the population of Daveyton was unofficially estimated to be about one million, with five clinics and medical centres, and more than 50 pre-primary, primary and secondary schools (*Ibid*). Malinga observes:

> The community of Daveyton is faced, like (other) townships in the East Rand, by a high rate of unemployment. The factors that contribute to this are illiteracy and unskilled community members. Coupled with this problem, is the shortage of proper housing and crime, which can be attributed to unemployment. Due to a high rate of unemployment, poverty is prevalent in Daveyton and has become a serious problem (*Ibid*).

By 2006, new settlements existed, both formal and informal. Etwatwa grew from extension 24 to 27 and extensions 1 in both Chris Hani and Chief Luthuli, (*see map 4*). The map also includes the new informal settlement of Zenzele, which is not yet recognised as a formal settlement by the local authority in spite of having been in existence since 1998.[25] This in itself implied an increase in the general population for the township (*see Tables on pages 98 to 99 for the population density of the new settlements*). The table shows the growth of population by about 59 636 in 2006. This number excludes undeclared settlements, which may be high (*see Map on p. 93)*. The area marked black indicates settled areas that are not official according to the local authority since they not included in official records (*Ibid*). Their exclusion means that no services such as water and electricity are provided.

Low incomes were made worse by transport costs that Daveyton residents had, unlike in Apex where they had to walk to their workplaces. The low incomes earned by the residents of Daveyton were reflected in their rent-paying capacity that shows under-payment and sometimes non-payment. Nieftagodien quotes the *Benoni Times*:

> Daveyton might be a model township with a handsome civic centre, modern brewery and an all-Native town council – but it was also a city of people existing on starvation wages (Nieftagodien, 1999: 180).

It was against these poor social and economic conditions and the frustration that change was slow after 1994 that Rastafarianism emerged in Daveyton. Later in this study, it will be shown, that the frustration experienced by the Rastafarians of

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[25] Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality: *Eastern District Spatial Development Framework*, March 2006.

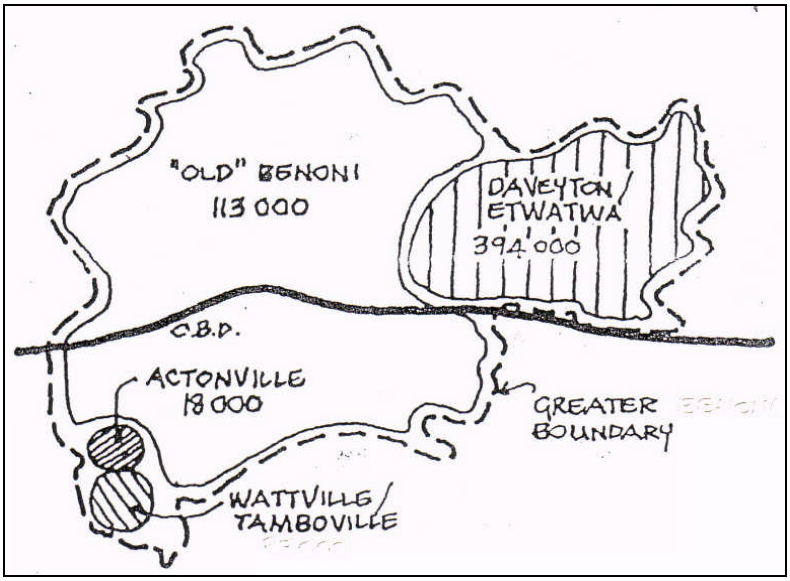
Daveyton grew out of the expectations they had of post-apartheid South Africa that were not fulfilled. The move to the new informal settlement of Maphupheni was meant to overcome overcrowding but it faced new problems. Even worse than in Daveyton, there was no electricity, sanitation, tarred roads and lack of municipal services during the early years of its establishment. As a result, the new informal settlement of Maphupheni came into being as an extension of Daveyton. In spite of all the problems associated with its early years of establishment, the new settlement grew and residents were faced with similar problems that prevailed in other informal settlements.

Conditions in Maphupheni were just as deplorable as in any other informal settlement in South Africa. Nevertheless, there were positive things that came with the move to Maphupheni that are important to note. "It gave us, the new generation, a chance to start our own families independent from our parents and landlords. It also gave us an opportunity to be able to organise ourselves into a formal movement, something we could not do when we were still residing in Daveyton" (*Interview*, *Jah Power*, 23rd September 2003)."

| AREA | PEOPLE | % OF TOTAL |
|---|---|---|
| Daveyton/Etwatwa | 394431 | 70,4 % |
| Wattville/Tamboville | 35000 | 6,3% |
| Actonville | 18000 | 3,2% |
| Old Benoni | 113000 | 20,1% |

**Table 1:** Population of Greater Benoni, 1997. [26]

[26] Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, 2006.




**Map 5:** Population distribution in Greater Benoni 1997.[27]

| **AREA** | **POPULATION** |
|---|---|
| CHIEF A LUTHULI | 3157 |
| CHIEF A LUTHULI EXT | 2733 |
| CHRIS HANI | 3828 |
| CHRIS HANI EXT 1 | 8431 |
| ETWATWA EXT 30 | 2712 |
| ETWATWA EXT 31 | 5209 |
| ETWATWA EXT 32 | 17474 |
| ETWATWA EXT 33 | 1634 |
| ETWATWA EXT 35 | 1296 |
| ETWATWA EXT 36 | 6672 |
| **TOTAL** | **59636** |

**Table 2:** Population of new settlements in 2006.[28]

It is clear that the move to the new settlement directly facilitated the emergence of a Rastafarian branch. Rastafarianism in Daveyton, according to thesis, was born out of the condition of deprivation on one hand and the desire to assert independence on the other. Rastafarianism entered Maphupheni through Daveyton. People who were to become Rastafarians in Maphupheni encountered the movement while still residing in Daveyton. In order to understand how

[27] Greater Benoni City Council, 1998.
[28] Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, 2006. This number does not include Zenzele.

Rastafarianism made its way to Daveyton and subsequently to Maphupheni, it is important to understand the general Movement and its origins.

## 4.2 The emergence of Rastafarianism in Daveyton

The origin of Rastafarianism in Daveyton and Africa can be linked to two important movements, namely Ethiopianism and Garveyism. The first attempts to break away from mission authority were local and took place within specific ethnic groups. The first important attempt was the ethnic church organised by Nehemia Tile in 1884. Tile was one of the group of African leaders of the Wesleyan Mission Church who was ordanined in 1880. After criticism by a missionary for his strong Tembu-nationalistic sympathies, he left and formed his church with Ngangelizwe (Tembu chief) as its visible head (Sundkler, 1961:38). "As the Queen of England was the head of the English Church, so the Paramount Chief of the Tembu should be the *summus epicospus* of the new religious organisation" (*Ibid.)*. The Taung of London Missionary made another attempt in 1885. Their chief, Kgantlapane took an active part in founding the Native Independent Congregational Church. These attempts became national when the idea of an independent African church spread to the Witwatersrand (*Ibid.).*

On the Witwatersrand, a group of Christians and their ordained minister (Mangena Makone) who broke away from the Wesleyan Missionary Society in 1892 started Ethiopianism. Makone was not happy with what he perceived to be racial segregation within the church where white and black were attending different conferences. He resigned form the Wesleyan Church and together with other disgruntled members formed a new religious organisation (*Ibid: 39)* . They called themselves Ethiopians after the prophesy of African redemption in Psalm 68, which reads: "*Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hand unto God.*"[29] In 1895, they met with the leaders of the African Methodist

[29] As is to be later seen, this psalm is one the psalms that Rastafarians recite in their prayers during the opening and closure of whatever gathering that they hold.

Episcopal Church and in 1896; their church was formally incorporated as the South African arm of the AME Church (Campbell, 1995: i).

Garveyism is the philosophy of Marcus Garvey, a descendant from the fiercely proud Maroons, who was born in 1887 in the town of St. Ann, Jamaica (Smith-Irvin, 1989: 3). At the age of fourteen he discovered that there were differences between human races, and he eventually became very conscious of his Jamaican roots which could be traced to Africa. In 1914, he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The vision of his movement was that of supporting and identifying with a free and independent Africa (*Ibid*). His slogan *Africa for Africans at Home and Abroad* (which means black unity and the establishment of a united Africa) became a rallying point for oppressed blacks all over the world. As opposed to the notion of *Back to Africa*, the nucleus of his ideology was freedom for blacks to guide their destiny which was based primarily on racial nationalism and freedom from colonial domination for Africa and all people of African descent (*Ibid*).

Garvey travelled extensively throughout the Caribbean and Central America where he reoriented blacks towards self-respect and self-reliance. He told his listeners that a black skin was not a symbol of shame but rather a glorious symbol of national greatness which they should be proud of (Cronon, 1987: 4). Among Rastafarians, Marcus Garvey was seen as a "black Moses" who was to lead them out of *Babylon* (slavery). More than anything, Garvey was concerned with what he described as the blackman's inferiority complex and made a number of predictions about their greatness when he prophesied in one of his famous speeches to look to Africa when a black king shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near. When Selassie was crowned in 1930, many of his followers felt that it was the fulfilments of that prophesy (*The Jamaican Observer,* 24th November 1996). From Jamaica, Garvey's ideas spread to other parts of the world.

Garveyism was not, however, new in Africa and South Africa. In the wake of the International Conference of Negro Peoples of the World in 1920, administrators across Africa were bombarded with rumours of the imminent arrival of African American colonists, even of Garvey himself (*Campbell*: 304-305). During the same year, South Africa awoke to the widespread circulation of both *The Negro World* and *The Black Man (*its local version). The South African government reacted by revoking the 1913 Immigration Act which prohibited the entry of black people who weree not domicile in the Union of South Africa (*Ibid:* 305).

During the mid-1920s, Wellington Buthelezi, who was a disciple of Marcus Garvey, had announced that a day of reckoning was at hand in which black Americans were coming to liberate Africans from European bondage (Edgar, 2000: 159). In Pondoland Garveyism and the idea of Wellington combined with indigeneous prophetic traditions and the activities of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa ignited a sweeeping millenarian movement *(Campbell*: 304). The Wellington movement is an example of a typical millenarian movement that involves a charismatic prophet-figure and a day of reckoning. Garvey's influence reached Wellington through a West Indian, Ernest Wallace, a representative of Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (*Ibid*).

> Wellington did not initiate his movement in a vacuum since Garveyism had caught hold in Southern Africa after the First World War and its fundamental concepts - the emphasis on the creative capabilities of African peoples, the potential for unification of peoples of Africa and of African descent, and the hope of reclaiming Africa from Europeans - were well received by Africans (*Ibid*).

Wellington preached in English, dressed in ministerial garb, and his meetings usually began with prayer, scripture reading and hymn singing. The hymns his congregation sung reinforced the themes of African freedom and unity (*Ibid:* 161). The Wellington movement:

> Exhibited an ambivalent attitude toward Europeans culture. Europeans were to be driven away, while at the same time Africans were to share in their material wealth. Factories were to spring up overnight; clothing was to be distributed to everyone; Africans were to have their own government (*Ibid:* 162).

This served as a springboard for Rastafarianism. In some senses, Rastafarianism such as the Wellington movement is based on the fundamental concepts of a united and free Africa, and the rejection of European culture (but selectively) and the existing order of things. As shall be argued later, Rastafarians also want the replacement of any form of government or kingdom with their own government.

The large-scale transfer of Rastafarianism from Jamaica to Daveyton, as in other parts of the world, is spread by reggae music. Reggae preached Garveyism and Ethiopianism the bedrock of Rastafarianism. The importance of the two movements is that they set in motion a notable period of historical convergence from both sides of the Atlantic, that is, Africa and black America.

The township of Daveyton followed more or less similar trends, as did other South African townships, concerning the emergence of the Movement. Before 1994, Rastafarians in Daveyton did not belong to any organised movement, although there were a few individuals wearing dreadlocks and their green, yellow and red colours. Little was also known about them, apart from the fact that they smoked *ganja* and listened to reggae music. However, 1994 marked a turning point for Rastafarians as well. It made communication possible, because they could move from one township to another as a group with little police harassment, something they could not do before (*Interview*, *Jah Power*, 23rd September 2003).

Rastafarianism was first introduced formally in Daveyton by *Jah Power* and *Ras* Doctor when, on 28 December 1997 they attended a gathering in Grasmere,[30] south of Johannesburg. Until then, there was no Rastafarian movement and there was little knowledge about the international movement amongst those who called themselves Rastafarians. *Jah Power* says of these early years:

> In those days, we also did not know that we have to gather and give *ises*. When congregating, members used to get together to play and dance to reggae music and thought that it was the way to congregate. Some few changes took place when they started to meet in Elder Warder's yard in Wattville. From there they

[30] From that time onwards, Grassmere has become an important centre where provincial and sometimes national gatherings are held.

> moved to Barcelona (Daveyton) where they gathered in Brother Skankin's yard form where they eventually moved permanently to Maphupheni (*Ibid*).

It was not until in 1997 after the Grasmere gathering attended by *Jah Power*[31] and *Ras Doctor* that Rastafarians in Daveyton started to come together into an organised movement. Elder Joseph from London and Bongo Time (Congo Wattu)[32] from Jamaica attended the gathering. It was also attended by representatives from other provinces with the exception of KwaZulu-Natal with no reason given for their absence. The aim of the gathering was to establish the Rastafari National Council (RNC) for the whole of South Africa. It took place at Elder Sipho's house. Rastafarians from Cape Town and Gauteng (especially those from Yeoville and Soweto) took care of the visitors. This was not only because they were the ones who seemed to know a lot about the Movement, according to *Jah Power*, they appeared to be *upful in the ways of the Most High,* implying that they knew how the *binghi* was conducted and could sing the anthem and chants, recite the creed and play drums (*Ibid*).

*Jah Power* and *Ras Doctor*, the self-declared representatives of the *House of Daveyton,* did not have the slightest idea of what the purpose of the gathering was and knew little about the existence of any formal Rastafarian organisation.

> We expected the gathering to be like others we were used to. There we sat and *reason* with other Rastafarians the whole day until late. We started to realise that the gathering was going to be something different and big when other Rastafarians arrived wearing white gowns and those present started to change into their gowns (*Ibid*).

Bongo Time chaired the gathering, which proceeded to shed light on what Rastafarianism entails. His message was very clear to all who attended. "He told us to *go back to our branches to organise, unify and centralise our members in preparation for the next gathering" (Ibid).* Documents such as the Nyahbinghi constitution, guidelines and hymnbook were distributed. Armed with these delegates went home with one aim in mind, to open a *house* on the East Rand. Their initial plan

[31] *Jah Power* was to later become instrumental not only in introducing to movement in Daveyton but in teaching those Rastafarians who were to become the cores of the movement.
[32] The two elders are well known and respected by all members of the Nyahbinghi Order worldwide.

was to open it in Wattville but the plan failed after the elder who was given the task of facilitating the opening was found to be a compulsive gambler (*Ibid*). Eventually, the *binghi* was held on an informal settlement in Apex between Wattvile and Daveyton with a view of later opening other houses in Wattvile and Daveyton (*Ibid*).

## 4.3 Conclusion

Although Daveyton was established as a showcase township, living conditions did not differ from those of other black townships. Instead of becoming a more habitable township, Daveyton attracted many people and its capacity was overwhelmed when informal settlements developed. Rastafarians were directly linked to those areas synonymous with deprivation.

In the period before 1994, Rastafarianism has been overshadowed by the struggle for liberation. Apart from the prevailing conditions in Daveyton the emergence, growth and popularity of the Movement can be explained in two ways. Firstly, it was the result of unfulfilled expectations after 1994. As will be seen, Rastafarians expected that the rights contained in the constitution would be extended to them as well. Secondly, it was due to the desire by some blacks to come up with a new a culture and a new identity. It will be shown that Rastafarianism offered a new prospect for marginalised people.

Although individual Rastafarians existed in South Africa before 1994, it was only in 1997 when Rastafarians from Jamaica arrived that the Movement was officially launched in the form of the *House of Fire*. As will be shown, Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* in Daveyton have managed to adapt Rastafarianism from Jamaica and altered it to suit their conditions.[33] Rastafarianism was officially introduced when the House of Fire of the Nyahbinghi Order was founded in 1998. Presently, three Rastafarian orders (*houses*) exist in Daveyton. *Moden House*

[33] An example of this innovation can be seen in the establishment of the Milchezedec order which is new in terms of coming up with new beliefs.

*of the Bobo Ashanti* and *Milchezedec* orders were established in 2001 and 2004 respectively. The *House of Fire*, being the oldest and the only one to have attained a certain level of organisation, was the most forthcoming when it came to giving information on the nature of Rastafarianism in Daveyton.

The next chapter is an examination of the activities of Rastafarians of Daveyton. This is conducted in order to determine the nature, activities and organisation of Rastafarianism, as it exists in the three orders. An understanding of the nature, activities and organisation will allow this study to determine whether Rastafarianism is a Millenarian movement (as generally defined in the literature) or not.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## Rastafarians of Daveyton

This chapter examines the nature of Rastafarianism and whether it fits in the category of millenarianism, cultural movements or subcultural movements. It shows that Rastafarianism differs from other Millenarian movements because the latter (with the exception of Christianity and Islam) are generally short-lived. Rastafarianism, on the other hand is a way of life, in which a holistic, all-encompassing subculture contests dominant cultural norms. It might be argued that since it is not subversive in an actual sense, perhaps it qualifies as a cultural movement.

Of great importance to this chapter is the existence of different *orders* (denominations) among the Rastafarians of Daveyton. These will be studied in detail in order to establish reasons why the breakaways from the original *house* occurred. This study investigates whether there is any connection among the orders in other parts of Africa, especially with reference to anti-colonial struggles, the visualisation of an Africa untainted by white colonialism, and the extent to which members want to be differentiated from the general society. Focus now shifts from the African context, mentioned in Chapter 2, to questions about how Rastafarianism intersects with this broader context. Other significant issues considered are the source of their knowledge and authority, how they come to know things, whether there is any correlation between sects and the sections of Daveyton. A thorough examination of reasons for the emergence of the Rastafarian movement as well as the different *orders* is conducted.

Data in this chapter was obtained primarily through analysing biographical information of the most prominent members of the Movement. The initial idea

was to interview informants. However, some of them indicated that they could give better information if they wrote their life histories. As a result, biographical information was gathered through person-to-person interviews and written responses in cases where informants indicated that they would be more comfortable writing their histories. Informants were merely asked to give their life history with guidelines on what they should cover, such as date of birth, school experience, employment history and other information that they felt was important. This information in turn helps to determine if there are various kinds of correlations (social class, level of education attained, age and employment status), including, what shapes an individual's decision to become a Rastafarian. Paying attention to the shapes and patterns within their narratives helps in finding out more about their perception of being a South African and of Rastafarianism. The importance of deciphering these deeper patterns in oral history narratives should be emphasised here. For those who write their narratives, they obviously give a great deal of thought on how to present their ideas in coherent and explanatory manner. As McMahan (1989: 79) puts it, it is the role of the interviewer to elicit and assess the information provided by the respondent.

This chapter begins by looking at the origin and nature of the three Rastafarian *orders* in Daveyton and the relationship between them, and examines whether they channel religious feelings only or serve a more practical purpose, such as helping their members make material advances in the world. It also provides an analysis of the biographical information provided by a group of adherents, and attempts to provide answers as to what type of people are likely to become Rastafarians, by analysing what attracts people to the Movement. An understanding of their educational, social, economic and family background helps throw some light on the Rastafarian informants' way of thinking and their approach to life. An understanding of the life histories of Rastafarians helps to determine how conditions in Daveyton influenced their lives, and assists in capturing the impact of the social, economic and political changes taking place in the township of Daveyton.

Although the bulk of the information comes mainly from oral interviews with Rastafarians as well as through participant observation, information was also obtained from documents produced by Rastafarians themselves, since these writings express their own views and feelings about contemporary issues.

## 5.1 Rastafarian Orders

Rastafarian orders in Daveyton are reflective of those that exist in other parts of the world where the Movement exists. With the exception of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, the other two sects in Daveyton are similar in many ways to that exist elsewhere. Internationally there are three distinct *orders* of Rastafari; namely, the Nyabhinghi Order, Bobo Ashanti and the Twelve Tribes of Israel (*See The Rastafarian Orders…2003*). Although these groups differ in terms of their beliefs and symbols, they agree on two common principles: The exalted status of Haile Selassie and the rejection of white Eurocentric images of divinity (*Ibid*). They all believe that *ganja* is a sacred herb that has been part of the Jewish Sabbath service since the days of King Solomon's Temple. That it was the holy smoke from the burning bush of Mount Sinai, and was the sweet weed that was growing from King Solomon's grave (Siwek, 2006).

In order to understand these *orders*, answers are provided to the questions of when, how, where and who was responsible for their formation. How is the power structure within them maintained? Are they patriarchal? Do they resemble other self-help groups that have been established in townships such as *stokvels*? The emergence of the three *orders* reflects some differences while the fact that they all fall under one Movement is a sign that they have more similarities than differences. Again, by examining the struggles these *orders* had to find *grounds* for worship is illuminating, especially when considering that it was made possible by various political developments. The problem of lack of land on which to build churches, as one informant put it; could be solved if Rastafarianism was recognised by the state as a religious movement because land could then be

allocated to them, as is the case with other religious movements (*Observation,* 29th June 2002).

The first organised *house* to emerge was the Nyabhinghi in1998, followed by the Bobo Ashanti in 2001.[34] The third denomination, the Twelve Tribes of Israel does not exist yet as an organised Movement in Daveyton, but a new denomination calling itself the *Milchezedec Order* made its appearance on the 13 December 2004 at an all-night gathering hosted by the *House of Fire.*

*The House of Fire of the Nyahbinghi Order* is situated at Maphupheni, a new informal settlement established during the late seventies and early eighties, while the Moden House is found in the old Daveyton location (*see map 4.4*). A common practice amongst Rastafarians is that each *house* gives itself a name; hence, the Nyahbinghi calls itself the *House of Fire* and the Bobo Ashanti the *Moden House.* The third to emerge was the *Milchezedec Order*, which is unique to Daveyton.

### 5.1.1 The House of Fire of the Nyahbinghi Order

It was in the *House of Fire* that I had the first encounter with Rastafarians and Rastafarianism on 22 June 2002. I was looking for the place where they congregate; I met an elderly Rastafarian who was selling some cosmetic items from door-to-door. The elder happened to know the place I was looking for and he took me there. I found the congregation in progress and joined them without any idea of what was going on. It was only late that afternoon that I tried to explain what the purpose of my visit was, that is, to ask for permission to conduct research. The issue was discussed and permission was granted with the belief that *you are not coming with evil intentions and if you were, Jah will punish you*. I intended to make it clear to them that I was going to take notes, record and ask them

[34] The third denomination, the Twelve Tribes of Israel does not yet exist as an organised movement on the East Rand. The only known is the one in Johannesburg with most of its members originating from Ethiopia.

questions. This was an obstacle, for Rastafarians usually do not allow strangers to interview or record their activities.

The *House of Fire*, as has been explained above, is the local branch of the Nyahbinghi Order, which, in terms of origin and membership is the oldest and biggest of the orders internationally with the other orders stemming from it. The name Nyahbinghi is derived from Queen Nyahbinghi, who is believed to have ruled Uganda in the 19th century and fought against the colonialists there.[35] Nyahbinghi operated as a revolutionary order during the early years of European colonial occupation with the aim of banishing the Europeans from Africa and preserving the spiritual and cultural integrity of the ancient African way of life. The word resurfaces in the period prior to the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy in 1935 (*Ibid*). As part of its propaganda, an Italian agent circulated a photograph of a young Ethiopian Emperor in an Amharic warrior's dress entitled *Nyabhinghi: Myth, Ritual and Music* in which:

> Emperor Selassie was depicted as the head of the Nyabhinghi Order. The Italian propaganda machinery went on to label the order as an international African secret society dedicated to the overthrow of white colonial domination through racial violence. This is [because] as it stood then, the word Nyahbinghi was said to mean *Death to the Whites or Death to the Europeans (Jahug, 1992:6).*

This may explain why Rastafarians were later to see a connection between Selassie and Nyahbinghi and to see their activities as a continuation of the Order. The *Jahug* further describes the history and aims of the Nyahbinghi:

> In terms of its organisation, the order was Pan African in scope with branches in Uganda, Nigeria, Angola, Sudan and Kenya. Its members were noted for their royal appearance, proud demeanour and uncompromising stance against white supremacy in any form. Following treason charges against the British crown, the order was banned in 1928. Emperor Haile Selassie gave Nyahbinghi a permanent home while in the rest of colonial Africa the order was either banned or driven underground. In 1930 Selassie (a little before his Imperial coronation) became its supreme commander and gave it the slogan *Death to the Enemies of the African Race (Ibid).*

In Jamaica, Leonard P. Howell, who travelled to Europe and Africa and used Nyahbinghi to rally Rastafarians against police brutality and racism, introduced

[35] The Rastafarian Orders/Sects.

the Nyahbinghi Order (adopted as central to Rastafarian belief system).[36] When adopted into the Rastafarian vocabulary of racial protest the word came to mean *Death to black and white oppressors.* The word also refers to the gathering of Rastafarians, the main purpose of which is to revive their faith through communal activity like drumming, *chanting of Ises*, *reasoning,* herbs smoking and dancing (*Ibid:* 7). Among Rastafarians, the word can mean various things and is sometimes shortened to *binghi*. It can, for example, refer to the gathering itself, to Rastafarians of the sect or the dance during gatherings (*Observation,* 29th June 2002). This is an example of how one word can loosely be used to refer to more than one thing with its usage dependent on the context within which it is used.

The early years of the conception of the Movement in Daveyton were not without problems. Inspired by the national gathering in Grasmere in 1997, as already seen in the previous chapter, attempts were made to establish a local Rastafarian *house* in Daveyton. When it became possible to open a new house there in 1997, the problem of where to hold the gatherings presented itself. The proposal that Jah Power's yard be used was rejected. Those who rejected this complained that they could not gather in Jah Power's yard because he was still a youth, so they proposed that Binghi Bunny's yard be used, but the space was too small.[37] Ras Doctor's place could also not be used because he was not recognised as a true Rastafarian and he smoked *Babylon sticks,* ate *flash*, and did not smoke *Ganja* (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny,* 05th January 2003).[38] What further complicated the problem of finding a place to gather was that the Rastafarians from Daveyton wanted the *House* to be opened in Daveyton itself and not in Maphupheni (*Ibid*).[39]

The problem of a place to gather was eventually solved when Jah Power and Ras Abraham obtained land during their work in the government *Masakhane* ('let us

[36] *Guidelines from the Ivine Order of H.I.M Emperor Haile Selassie I The First*.
[37] It is important to note here that whether one is a youth is determined not by age but by his marital status.
[38] *Ras* Doctor only started to smoke *Ganja* after attending the workshop in Grasmere.
[39] The problem about a *house* to be established in Daveyton was to be resolved later with the opening of the Moden House.

build each other') Project.[40] In allocating it, the local authorities stipulated that the land should be shared between Rastafarians and an *iseness* man selling cement and sand. However, this land was given to the Rastafarians on a temporary basis. According to Priest Binghi Bunny, it bothers them that the land they occupy is not legally theirs (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny,* 05th January 2003). Attempts to buy the site resulted in the setting up of a committee consisting of three elders who were all volunteers, who approached the local authority with the aim of negotiating with the local authorities to purchase the land. In giving feedback about their negotiations with the Greater Ekurhuleni Metro,[41] the committee reported that the site was set aside for *iseness* (business) and that there are sites set aside for the erection of churches. They were given a map to choose from a number of sites. The *house* decided that two applications should be made, one for the church and the other for the presently occupied site to be used for the *iseness* (*Observation*, 29th June 2002). This explains why the tabernacle and other structures built on the land are only temporary. The intention has always been to acquire permanent land where permanent structures could be erected.

The site that they had to occupy was situated in the middle of residential houses and because it was unoccupied, was used as a dumping place. Residents had problems with the stench coming from the place. It became a health hazard, a dumping ground for dead dogs, which is why the Rastafarians did not resist when the land was finally occupied for gathering purposes. An immediate problem was to get labour to clean the land. A committee was once again set up consisting of *Jah Youth* and *Ras Abraham* (who were founding members of the *House of Fire*) to liaise with the health department of the Town Council, who were helpful in removing the rubble. After cleaning people continued to dump their rubbish until a fence was erected with the help of neighbours (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny*, 05th January 2003).

[40] The Masakhane Project was a national initiative by the government to provide employment by encouraging people to work together towards the complition of a specific project.
[41] The Greater Ekurhuleni Metro was established in 2000.

Once a *house* opened, contacts with other religious movements were made, especially with the Moslems and the Zion Christian Church as they showed an interest in the *house's* existence. "The main reason for consulting with them was to make them aware of 'our' existence as an organised *house"* (*Ibid*). Once the *House of Fire* was established, two new problems surfaced one of spreading the message of its existence, and the other of teaching new members about the Movement.

> These were difficult early years because even before the official establishment of the house gatherings were mainly reasoning sessions because only four of us knew the chants. Most time was thus spent trying to teach those who did not know about the Nyahbinghi order, *binghi* works (administration, chants, the creed, Psalms and drumming. Because we were four it meant that the first *government* could be constituted (*Interview*, *Jah Power,* 07th January 2003).

In 1998, therefore, the *House of Fire* was officially opened by the provincial Nyahbinghi. The *government* consisted of Priest Binghi Bunny[42] as *elect of chairperson* (chairperson), Ras Jack as *elect of records* (secretary), Ras Doctor as *elect of Treasure* (treasurer), and Jah Power as organiser and assistant *elect of records*. Rastafarians attended celebrations for the opening of the house in Daveyton from houses around the Gauteng province (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny*, 05th January 2003).

The *House of Fire*, which, as a local branch of the denomination of the House of Nyabhinghi Order, is grounded on the following religious rights:

1. It shall abide by the Bible (King James version), Holy Piby, all teachings and speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I.
2. The first Saturday of every month shall be the official day of worship for all houses.
3. The *holy herb* (marijuana) shall be used at all gatherings of Nyahbinghi Holy sessions.

[42] The first government was formed at *Binghi Bunny's* place, and he was to later become one of the first priests of the House of Fire.

4. No youth (under18) shall be permitted to smoke *ganja* unless used in another form with parental supervision.
5. All members must be married especially the Priesthood and those who live with the Queen.
6. Members of the Nyabhinghi shall not be persecuted or discriminated against for wearing dreadlocks, as it is a holy vow.
7. No polygamy is allowed in the House of Nyabhinghi Order.
8. No fornication is allowed.[43]

Members of the *House of Fire* refer to these rites (including the one that deals with diet) as *Baptism of Fire*. These rites are the source of division among Rastafarians, leading to individual disaffection or the formation of the various splinter groups; Rastafarians who are not attached to any *order* have a problem with the last of these religious rights while those of the *Milchezedec Order* have a problem with number seven.[44] The other religious rights, especially rights number one, three and six are the ones that keep Rastafarians of different sects together in spite of their differences (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny*, 05th January 2003).

It is important to note parallels between the religious rights of Rastafarians and the Isiah Shembe of the Nazareth Church who set out marriage regulations for his church and for those who lived on church land (Gunner: 91. Preaching against fornication Shembe warned his followers that when God destroyed the community of Gibiya he did not spare a single person. "He killed the old and the young; only 400 women survived. They were young women who did not take part in the nasty practice of fornication." *(Ibid.)*

Organisationally, the Nyahbinghi Order is an international movement with its headquarters in Jamaica. In South Africa, the order is divided into national, provincial, regional and local *houses.* The national Nyahbinghi has its headquarters in Cape Town and is known as the Marcus Garvey Tabernacle. It is under the control of the (Rastafari National Council) RNC. The RNC is

[43] *Constitution of the Nyabhinghi Order*.
[44] See 5.1.4 for differences between the various *orders* in Daveyton.

constituted of the National Office in Cape Town, the National Council of Priesthood in Knysna/Cape Town, the National Chair in Kimberley, the Secretaries in Southern Cape/Mpumalanga, Public Relations Office (P.R.O) in Cape Town, and the Financial Advocate in Port Elizabeth.[45] As mentioned earlier, the RNC was formed in 1997 by Bongo Time in Gauteng. Following the establishment of the RNC was the formation of the Rastafari Official Board or Committee (ROB/C) in 2002 by Congo Sihle in Pretoria. The RNC formulated the active structure of the ROB/C, which appointed Congo Sihle as its first chairperson. The main duty of the RNC is to pass information on to the provincial *houses,* which, in turn, passes it on to the regional and from there the Regional to Local Houses (*Ibid*). Based on the structure of the international Nyahbinghi Order, the *House Fire* has a complex and broad governance structure.
The establishment of the Nyahbinghi order was made possible only after 1994, as has been suggested above. The provincial Nyahbinghi is situated in all the provinces of South Africa and is under the control of the Provincial Executive Administration (PEA).[46] It is the responsibility of the PEA to communicate with representatives of all religions of the region. They must know the Regional and Local Administration Executives as well as where the land to use as *Hailfari Ground* or where the Tabernacle is located. It is also the duty of the PEA to introduce the way of the Rastafarian syllabus, to identify locations or buildings for Rastafarian schools, and to obtain sites for commercial and industrial development. [47]

An example of a Regional House is the East Rand House, which is made up of all local houses in most of the townships of the East Rand, with the *House of Fire* being one of them. As stipulated in the constitution of the Nyabhingi orders, the *House of Fire* in Daveyton consists of the Priesthood, *Ilect of records, Ilect of Treasurer,* Council of *Elders,* Council of *Sistrens,* and Council of Youth (*Ibid*). The Priesthood is constituted by *elders* who undertake the responsibility of overseeing

[45] *Constitution of the Nyabhinghi Order*.

[46] Interview, *Binghi Bunny* Not all provinces have the Provincial Nyahbinghi branch. The known ones are the Cape, Gauteng, Free State, Mpumalanga and North West. The aim of the National Nyabhinghi is to make sure that all provinces establish Provincial Nyahbinghi.

[47] *Constitution of the Nyabhinghi Order.*

proceedings during *grounding, as well as to* serve in the Council of Priesthood at a national level. There is a general belief amongst Rastafarians that the priest is not elected or appointed but is *ilect of self* (self-elected) and ordained by *Jah.* This means that any elder, provided he knows what is expected of him, can elect himself to the position of priesthood.[48] Only men can elect themselves into the position of priesthood. Women cannot become priests because there are times in their lives when they cannot stand in front of men. These times are, for example, when they are pregnant or during the process of *cleansing* (menstruation) (*Observation*, 29th June 2002). Older people who constitute the Council of Elders assist priests in their duties. Their main duty is to oversee the proceedings of the gathering and say prayers before and after every session.

The Priesthood consists of males who are well nurtured and have led exemplary lives in the *Ivine livity* of Rastafari. The main duties of the Priests are to minister around the altar of the Tabernacle, oversee the proceedings of the congregation and say prayers before and after every session, as well as the sanctification of the newborn sons and *dawtas*. The signature of the Priest must be affixed to all official documents of the Nyahbinghi Order (*Jahug,* 1992: 42). It is also the duty of the priests to arrange all programmes and information needed for the *binghi* and make sure that requirements such as drums, flags, chants, guidelines and the Tabernacle are ready for the service.

Members of the *House of Fire* fall into three main categories, namely: Elders, Youths, and Sisters with each forming its own committee or council (*Observation*, 2nd February 2002).[49] According to the *Jahug* the Council of Elders should consist of older *bradrens* who maintained the *livity* of Rastafari over a number of years. They act as mediators where there are differences of opinion, and as guardians of the Movement. Their decisions are treated with great respect (*Jahug*, 1992: 42). The Youth and Sisters Councils share responsibilities but for different age groups and gender. The Sisters Council, for example, holds *reasoning* sessions and

[48] *Ibid.*
[49] For youths to move-up and join the Council of Elders they must be above 18 years old.

discusses issues affecting Rastafarian women, family life, and the education of children as well as health care. The Sisters Council is also expected to arrange accommodation for daughters, the youth programme and any other input for the *binghi.* Note that the Youth Council is the most active of all the structures within the *house* (*Observation*, 29th June 2002; *Jahug*, *1992:* 42).

In addition to the above structures, the House of Fire consists of various committees or councils charged with overseeing that all the activities of the house run smoothly or organising big events such as hosting visitors from other houses, or preparations for celebration of big events. These committees are:

1) Working committee — to organise fund-raising events
2) Publicity committee — to organise information, the daily programme, posters and banners as well as to publish the event through the radio, newspaper, in dance halls and by word of mouth
3) Welcome committee — to organise lists of visitors, registration for people coming to the event, welcoming of guests to the event as well as making sure that they are well looked after
4) Catering committee — to organise, prepare and serve *itals* (food) to the guests.
5) Security committee — to make sure that guests are well looked after, to make sure that all materials are kept safe and that everybody is safe (*Ibid*).

It is the duty of every Rastafarian to contribute something be it money, food or assistance to the above committees whenever a gathering is to be held. To serve on any of these committees, members have to elect themselves by filling in a form known as the Portfolio *Oathing* Form. In this form one commits oneself to serve in any committee of choice. Failure to perform duties volunteered for may result in a fine to be determined by the committee under which one is serving (*Observation*, 06th April 2002).

The *House of Fire* as a local house has to register with the national Nyahbinghi through the regional and provincial houses. In terms of its organisation, the Movement mimics official South African government structures and mechanisms for granting citizenship. To be a true Nyahbinghi Rastafarian, one has to register with the National Nyahbinghi but must first join the local house. Registration for membership costs R20.00 plus four passport photos, which are sent to the regional or provincial office through the local house. In the regional or provincial office the priest, *elect of records*, *elect of chairperson*, and *elect of treasure* attach their signatures and send the registration form to the National office. The four photographs are used as follows: the first one is placed on an identity card (which is laminated with rainbow colours and registration mass number), the second one is placed on information form, the third photograph appears on the Rastafarian Diploma of Righteous Livity (RDRL), and the fourth one is attached to the qualification form. In addition to the registration fee, members should pay an annual subscription fee of R10.00 per month or R120.00 per annum. The main reason for registration is to enable the Movement to register as a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or Non-Political Organisation (NPO) (*Jahug*, 1992: 42).

Thus, we may observe that the organisation of Rastafarians into a bureaucratic structure helps to legitimise them, both in a formal sense, and in a way, that compensates them for the deficiencies they feel in relation to the new South African. The formal structure described above provides a legitimate way for the house to exist within the formal realm of civil society, for example, it enables members to participate in community projects because they are recognised as part of a formal organisation. Yet, as already stated, Rastafarians prefer their own form of government. The fact that their bureaucratic procedures mimic that of the state can be seen as way of satisfying their thwarted political aspirations.

In order to run its affairs, money is needed by the Provincial *House*. Local and regional *houses* should register themselves with the Provincial Registration Office. They must pay a quarterly fee of R200.00 to the Provincial House, which

amounts to an annual fee of R800.00. It is the responsibility of the Provincial Office to collect fees from the Local and Regional *Houses* and provide them with identification cards and diplomas as proof of registration. The Provincial House must also register itself with the National Office. The Provincial Executive pays a fee of R1000-00 annual registration. The funds raised from registration are invested in medical, legal and educational needs (*Ibid*).

By investing money raised from registration for social needs, Rastafarianism functions in a more or less similar manner as do *stokvels*. *Stokvels* are informal saving schemes in which individuals make a monthly payment towards a mutual fund and members make a monthly turn to use the pooled money to buy something they could not afford individually (Anon, 1996:1). *Stokvels* were a key source of income generation among women. They also became popular amongst migrant workers who saved money together for transport back home, or to be buried, in case of an accident (*Ibid*). The difference is that Rastafarians are not expected to make a monthly contribution after paying the registration fee, as it is the case in other *stokvels.* We see that there are ways in which this order resembles the self-help stokvel. Nevertheless, in the case of the Rastafarians, they do not expect monetary returns from investments. The *House of Fire* sets about meeting the requirements of registering as an NPO, and in that sense, clearly wants official recognition, and is prepared to work within the necessary parameters. On the other hand, it seems to try to avoid strict classification as either a political or a religious movement.

### 5.1.2 The Moden House of the Bobo Ashanti/Dread

This is the second *order* to emerge in Daveyton in 2001. The word *Bobo Ashanti* - also called *Bobo Shanti* — is derived from *Bobo*, which stands for Black and Ashanti, which is a tribe with a reputation for ferocity from Kumasi, Ghana. The name was chosen because of the belief that most slaves taken to Jamaica were from the Ashanti tribe and are thus the ancestors of many Jamaicans. Prince Emmanuel Charles Edward in Jamaica founded the Bobo Shanti order in the

1950s. Using the book of Revelations 5, they justify Prince Emmanuel as the re-incarnation of the Christ.[50]

> He is regarded as the reincarnate Black Christ in a priestly state. He is called by most members of the Bobo Shanti as Prince Emmanuel Charles Edwards, without Mother or Father, the Priest of Milchezedec, the Black Christ in Flesh. He, along with his descendants and Haile Selassie are seen as Gods. Marcus Garvey is regarded as prophet (*Ibid*).

Members of the *Bobo Shanti* are also called *Bobo Dreads,* and they wear long robes and very tightly wrapped turbans. Their lifestyle closely resembles that prescribed by the Old Testament Jewish Mosaic Law that includes the observation of Sabbath from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday and special greetings amongst themselves. Members do not work during the Sabbath and they avoid the consumption of salt and oil (*Ibid*).

The researcher was there at an opportune time to conduct research during the time when the split within the *House of Fire* took place. A debate had been going on within the *house* on whether to cover hair or wear a turban during congregation. Those who were later to establish the *Moden House* used to attend in the *House of Fire*. Rastafarians who broke away from the *House of Fire* in 2000 established the *Bobo Shanti Order* in Daveyton in 2001. The new *house* was based on the same order that governed *Bobo Shanti* in Jamaica and elsewhere in the world where it exists. It was given the name *Moden House* by its founding members Humbleness, Copticman, Fireman, A'ncientman, Negus, Anubah and Eric (*Interview*, *Humbleness*, 23rd September 2003). The name *Moden* is an abbreviation of 'Men of Eden' (*Ibid*). As has been indicated, it was the feeling of Rastafarians from the old Daveyton that the *house* could have been established in Daveyton. Thus, perhaps more than anything, the reason for the breakaway could have been a case of regional alliance.

Outlining the general aim and objective of the new *house,* Humbleness declares that the overall focus of the Moden House is based on *Edutainment*, that is, Education and Entertainment, (an idea influenced by recent media approaches)

[50] The Rastafarian Orders/Sects.

(*Ibid*). Their focus on education differs from that of *House of Fire* in that their approach is practical, shown by their running of classes. As their aim is entertainment, Rastafarians of the *Moden House* are responsible for organising dances. In addition, the *Moden House* was founded upon the following specific aims and objectives:

- To unite Rastafari community
- To uplift Rastafari community spiritually and materially
- To empower Rastafari community
- To fight against petty prejudice
- To establish a new venture in our talents
- To establish an entertainment company
- To preach about Rastafari (*Ibid*)

In order to realise these objectives, the seven members agreed on a weekly contribution of R10.00 per member towards the hiring of a sound system for weekly dances. There is also a contribution of R50.00 every third week per member towards the booking of a hall for fundraising purposes. Funds raised are used to buy and for servicing the music systems for the *house (ibid).* As in the case of the *House of Fire*, the *Moden House* also operates in the same way as *stokvels.* The difference between the two *houses* is that, in the case of *Moden House*, cooperation takes place at local level and on a weekly basis, but like the *House of Fire*, the *Moden House* does not expect any monetary returns for their investments.

The *Moden House* also managed to open a school known as the Jerusalem School in August 2003, where the teachings of Rastafari are taught. Teaching and learning takes place at Khumalo Shops where they rent the second floor of the building for R200.00 per month. The school targets its learners from the young people of Daveyton and had its first classes in August 2003. According to Humbleness, learners are demanding more lessons on Rastafarian diet, history, faith and other aspects related to the Movement. Besides learning and teaching:

> We also hold seminars every Tuesday and Wednesday. We the Bobo Dreads of Daveyton give *Ises* unto Jah Rastafari every Thursday in an open field of the

> Daveyton Golf Course. We pray with our turban on and we pray Emmanuel, Marcus Garvey and Haile Selassie as the *Hola* Trinity (*Ibid*).

This belief in the *Hola* Trinity is what greatly differentiates, in doctrinal terms, the *Bobo Shanti* from the Nyahbinghi, who believe in only one *Jah* in the person of Haile Selassie as they always maintain:

> So as the son is one, so is Haile Selassie I, The Might of The Trinity Jah Rastafari is one. One heart, one love, one moon, one earth, one life, so there must be God (*Jahug, 1992: 4*).

The main difference between the *Moden* and the *House of Fire* is that while Marcus Garvey is also considered central to the Movement' Emmanuel is the most important prophet for the *Moden House*.

### 5.1.3 The Milchezedec Order

As in the case of the *Moden House*, the *Milchezedec Order* broke away from the *House of Fire*. The word *Milchezedec* is biblical, meaning the 'Prince of Salem' or 'Prince of Peace'. Rastafarians of this *order* also believe in covering their heads with turbans but wear black instead of white robes. They have their centre in the new informal settlement called Mandela, and made their appearance on the 20th December 2003 by visiting the *House of Fire* to notify its members of their existence. Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* interpreted their visit as an attempt to lure them to join their *house*. It was not clear then what the tenets of the new

house were. According to the priest of the *House of Fire,* they differ from other *orders* in that:

> They *chant* with seven queens, especially the priests. They have official priests (and) have been baptised by being dipped into the water of any river. All members should also be baptised by water in the river. Most important about this new Movement is that they declared themselves as a religious movement unlike the other two who see theirs as a way of life (*Interview*, *Monty*, 04th January 2004).

Their religiousity can be seen in the way they intend to congregate. The number seven is central to their religion. During their congregation, the sermon should be

presided over by seven priests and seven candles should be lit.[51] There is no information available about some of their other beliefs and practices of this house as it was at an early stage of its development. A few of those belonging to the *House of Fire* have some basic knowledge of this order, probably because the latter tried to convince them to join their Movement.

Members of the other houses see the *Milchedezic* as emerging out of the desire by its membership to practise polygamy and nothing else. This is why the emergence of the other houses had problems with it. Members of the three sects always meet every Sunday for dances. It is during the dance that their differences are debated and discussed. These debates and discussions may sometimes become heated. The main cause of this problem is that each of these *orders* sees themselves as the rightful representative of the Rastafarianism (*Observation*, 04th January 2004).

### 5.1.4 The Rastafarian Orders in Context

What we are seeing is that the Rastafarians of Daveyton not only managed to form their own identity but also created new identities within their own respective *houses* ('internal' boundaries). In this way, their identities have become fluid, and shift between being a Rastafarian in general and a member of a specific sect. The 'internal' boundaries within the Movement are created when one group of Rastafarians feels the need to differentiate itself through the proclamation or membership of one sect, which distinguishes it doctrinally, from the others. At the same time, these boundaries are eroded when the members of different orders attend certain common occasions, such as dances and funerals. It should be noted that Rastafariansa alone know these 'internal' boundaries. Members of the broader society cannot differentiate between members of various sects and see Rastafarians as one.

[51] Note that members of the House of Fire do not use candles because they claim that *Jah* is their light and they don't need any other light.

The main difference in the religious orientation of the three orders can be expressed in terms of numbers. The *House of Fire* believes in the number one, that there is only one *Jah.* The *Moden House* believes in the number three as in the Holy Trinity. The number for the *Milchezedec Order* is seven and its religious beliefs and practices centre on this number. In spite of these differences, contact is always maintained between different orders when, for example, there are celebrations or funerals for their members. In spite of observable differences between members of all *orders*, they all see themselves as Rastafarians. They praise one Jah, attend dances and dance together, listen to the same music, and sing the same songs during congregations (*Interview*, *Humbleness*, 23rd September 2003). Note that neither the *Moden* nor the *Milchezedec Orders* have an international branch in South Africa and this makes it difficult to organise themselves even at local level (*Ibid*).

Other differences are expressed as doctrinal, although as the argument above has suggested, differences may actually be occurring at another level, for example because of territorial allegiance or social differentiation identified by different parts of Daveyton. Though taking place after those of Jamaica, the reasons for the doctrinal break between the *House of Fire* and the *Moden House* are similar to those that resulted in a split between the Nyahbinghi and the Bobo Dreads in Jamaica. The major cause centres on the issue of wearing a turban during congregation (*Ibid*). The causes of the breakaway are representative and fundamental in the sense of being primary identity markers, and the differences seem impossible to reconcile. The other cause which has to do with religious clothing is also fundamental because for Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* dreadlocks are their trademark, while for those of the *Moden House* wrapping their dreadlocks with a turban is one of the components of their identity. Though these differences may seem trivial, they are, in fact crucial in signifying a specific, chosen identity, with associated doctrinal beliefs or principles. Often doctrinal detail depends on the history of the particular African country with which the adherents identify.

The common characteristic of the two *houses* is their connection with other African tribes that were anti-slavery and anti-colonialism, with the differences lying in the country to which each attaches significance. The *House of Fire*, as part of the Nyahbinghi Order, traces the origin of its name from Uganda and sees Ethiopia as Africa, Zion or heaven, and so glorifies her. The *Moden House*, on the other hand, traces the origin of its name from Ghana but because Selassie is one of its prophets, Ethiopia is untouchable, as is the case with the other *house.*

Rastafarians closely identify with the history of Africans who have challenged colonialism, slavery and exploitation. In addition, the doctrines are powerfully infused with Old Testament scriptural laws. Thus, the respect for African resistance against the encroachment of white colonialism (and its values) combine with the elements of Juadao-Christianity, are also marked features of the Rastafarian movements.

The first two orders discussed resemble a religion based on the Mosaic commandments: monogamy and monotheism, some of which contradict what are generally thought of as traditional African values. However, the *Milchezedec Order* may be seen as an attempt by Rastafarians to incorporate the traditional African practice of polygamy. This is in direct contrast with the practice of the other two *houses* that believe in one man one woman. Nevertheless, it seems that the *Milchezedec Order* is still trying to establish an identity separate from that of the two *houses*. Though both the *Milchezedec Order* and the *House of Fire* believe in sanctification, they differ in respect to where they perform it. Like many Christian movements, members of the *Milchezedec Order* sanctify their members in the river, while those of the *House of Fire* sanctify them indoors. Thus, it may be concluded that there are fundamental differences in principles (some of which concern ritual and clothing), which appear to be deeply implicated in identity issues.

There are also Rastafarians who are not attached to any of these *orders.* These are probably in the majority. These Rastafarians do not congregate and are not members of any of the three sects. They are certainly in the majority during

dances, and became Rastafarians because of their liking for reggae music and *ganja*. Because they do not belong to any of the sects, no religious rights bind them and as a result, they appreciate women, take cold drinks, and eat any type of food sometimes mixing it with *ganja* and sometimes even smoke cigarettes (*Observation*, 04th January 2004). Rastafarians belonging to this group serve as a pool of new members, likely to become fully converted. Almost all of them know or have been to the *binghi* and know members who attend.

In spite of the differences that exist amongst Rastafarians of Daveyton, there are things that bind them together as Rastafarians. As already stated, members of society are not aware of the different houses but see all Rastafarians as a single movement (for instance, in prayers for peace or in celebration of special events) and anyone from any of the houses claiming to represent Rastafarians is viewed to be representing all of them. Because they preach unity, they must always appear as one so that they are perceived by society to be practising what they preach. Reggae music and dances tend to be unifying forces because irrespective of affiliation, all of them play reggae music and attend dances (*Ibid*).

## 5.2 Biographical information: An analysis

In addition to information collected, I felt it necessary to compile biographies of my informants — in order to examine the intersection of Rastafarianism with current lived experiences of Daveyton. Information in this part of the chapter is based on the biographical information that is contained in the Appendix. This information was obtained mainly through interviews. Interview questions were to provide information on the following aspects of informants' life experiences: name and place of birth, age, sex and marital status; family history and social status; level of education; employment history; initiation into Rastafarianism, the influence of reggae music, *ganja* and dance; diet; attitude towards politics, other religions and the society; and other discernable patterns or attributes arising from their life stories, for example, differences and similarities amongst members.

This part of the chapter looks for correlations between *orders* and place; economic and social backgrounds (including educational qualification attained); gender and age-youth ratios and individual perceptions of what Rastafarianism is. The table below is a summary of information extracted from the life histories provided by my informants.

### 5.2.1 Social and Economic Background

One Rastafarian describes how he grew up as follows:

> I never knew my father and I have been searching for him until I stopped. I grew up under the care of my uncle and only met my brothers and sisters very late in my life. I am not even sure of my correct surname (*Interview*, *Kebra*, 14th May 2003).

Another one describes his early life as follows:

> We (me and my younger brother who is also a Rastafarian) stayed with our parents until they separated. After that, we went to stay with our father who was
>
> unemployed and an alcoholic. We stayed with him for almost four years without seeing our mother because he could not let us see her. It was until between 1996 and 1997 that we made contact with her through our aunt (*Interview*, *Wiseprophet*, 23rd October 2003; *Humbleness*, 23rd September 2003).

The above quotations show that some Rastafarians did not grow in a "normal" family environment, (*see Appendix*). In the first quotation, the informant stresses the loss of identity experienced by an individual as a family or clan member. The second informant emphasises the loss of family contact. The meaning of this may be interpreted as a loss of identity and of a sense of belonging. In this, we begin to see why Rastafarianism became attractive to them. The table in the Appendix shows that most of those who are classified as elders are from poor social and economic backgrounds. They are mostly from broken families; most grew up with a single parent or with relatives. This in turn means that they could not afford schooling beyond secondary school level and in most likelihood did not complete

their complete their secondary education.[52] This suggests that most of those interviewed became Rastafarians at school; hence, why they place great value on acquiring knowledge. Their search for a common identity seems to stem from a common background: no stable family background, rejection by school authorities (dreadlocks), and no education beyond secondary education.[53]

The description of their school years is characterised by contradictions. While all of them describe their school years as a glorious moment of their lives, they also report rejection or harassment by their principals and teachers chiefly because of their dreadlocks. It may also be that those who attended school before the new democratic dispensation were bound to clash with authorities because Rastafarianism was viewed as one of the anti-apartheid forces in South Africa. The wearing of dreadlocks, it seems, was the main cause of disagreement between school authorities and Rastafarians, as in the case of *Sister May*.[54]

One common thing about the Rastafarians in Daveyton is their preference for their Rastafarian nicknames. These new names arose from a desire to do away with the European ones given to them by their parents, and at the same time help them to cement their Rastafarian identities. The names are given to them either by other Rastafarians or by themselves. It is usual for them to know each other by these names and sometimes they never know each other's real name. A name is given to somebody because of the way she/he lives or that person gives herself/himself in relation to the life she/he is living or has chosen to live. Examples are names like Humbleness and Wiseprophet.[55] This indicates that both humility and wisdom are valued.

Answering the question of how he came to be called Humbleness, he says *I gave myself this name because when I decided to be a Rastafarian I took an oath to live a humble life, hence the name*. *Wiseprophet* got his name from the house and *I think it is because*

[52] It must be noted that all Rastafarians have been to school hence they can write and speak English.
[53] See Appendix A.
[54] There is some tolerance for dreadlocks because most people wear them as fashion.
[55] See Apendix A.

*(of the) positive contribution I make during reasoning and discussions in general*. Names are also given after other Rastafarians, such as *Bingy Bunny* and *Yellowman*, given after reggae singers, while others such as *Kingman, Kebra Negus* (Rastafarian Bible) and *Jah Power* are based on the Rastafarian belief system (*Interview*, *Wiseprophet*, 23 October 2003). The *Kebra Negus* is the Ethiopian addendum to the Holy Bible, and it describes the possible union between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba (Siwek, 2006). In cases where a person does not have a Rastafarian name his or her original name is used and it is preceded by Ras, King, Elder or Brother in the case of men, and Queen or Sister in a case of women. Examples of these are *Sister May* or *Queen Fire*.

### 5.2.2 Correlation between *Orders* and Place

The majority of Rastafarians in Daveyton are originally from the East Rand with some originating from other parts of South Africa. Although most members of the *House of Fire* are originally from Daveyton, the majority of them presently live in the Maphupheni informal settlement. This is because their *house* is located in Maphupheni. Members of the *Moden House* are all from the old Daveyton Township, while those of the *Milchezedec Order* are mostly from Mandela.[56] As it were, members were born in different places. While almost all members of the *Moden House* are originally from Daveyton, those of the *Milchezedec* and the *House of Fire* are originally from all over South Africa. This is because the settlements are new and as a result house, not only people who are not originally from Daveyton, but also those from other places.[57] Members of different houses seldom talk about their places of origin unless under specific circumstances as in the case when there were visitors from Swaziland (*Observation,* 23rd March 2002).

### 5.2.3 Gender presentation, Age-youth Ratio, and Marital Status

Rastafarian life stories also reveal that their community consists of a large number of males and youths and a very small number of females and adults. Although the

[56] Just like the Milchezedec Order, the Mandela informal settlement is also still new.
[57] There was a case of a Rastaman from Ghana who whilst waiting for his employers to call him to Durban for his work, stayed in the *house* and attended gathering with them.

table shows the age range from 18, it need be said that there are Rastafarian children who attend the *binghi* with their parents. The age range of members of the Movement starts from 13 years to elders who are in their early 40's. There is also a remarkable age difference between members of the three *houses*. The *House of Fire* consists of youths and elders, while the *Milchezedec* and *Moden House* consist mainly of unmarried youths. The reason for this is that the two houses are still new in contrast to the *House of Fire* where the elders are the founding fathers of the *house*. This also explains why the majority of members of the *House of Fire* are married and are family oriented with their wives and children constituting members of the Movement (*Ibid*).

### 5.2.4 Economic, Social and Political Perceptions

The general attitude that prevails amongst Rastafarians is their dislike of working for an employer. They believe in self-employment or in doing community work. This attitude stems from the belief that working for someone for wages perpetuates slavery, and that real work is what you do for yourself. Those who are involved in some form of formal employment do so as an attempt to raise capital in order to start their own businesses. However, majority of Rastafarians are self-employed; some are unemployed and a few are in formal employment or still looking for a job. Opinion on whether one should be employed differs from individual to individual. Three types can be identified. The first consists of those who do not believe in any employment and are not working or looking for one (Wiseprophet and Humbleness are an example). This group believes they work for *Jah* by sometimes doing community work and spreading the word of *Jah* (*Interview*, *Wiseprophet*, 23rd October 2003 and *Humbleness*, 23rd September 2003). The second group is that of those who are self-employed. The majority sell fruits, vegetables, Rastafarian items, or operating Tuck Shops. *Jah Power* and *Kebra* fall into this group. Those who do trade work (carpentry) such as Priest *Bingy Bunny* also fall into this group. The last group consists of those who see nothing wrong with employment. They work sometimes to raise money to start their own small businesses. Irrespective of their attitude to employment, all those interviewed see

lack of it as one of the major economic and social problems facing the new democracy.[58] Dislike of formal employment and preference for self-employment could be a pragmatic way of dealing with the high unemployment rate experienced in South Africa.

A common trend amongst Rastafarians is that those who were politically active before their conversion lost interest when they became Rastafarians. One informant said Pan Africanism influenced him; he became aware that politics was a dirty game then turned to Rastafarianism. On this, he says:

> Before the general elections of 1994, I was a member of the African National Congress Marshal structure. During the same year, I wanted to join the *Umkhonto we Sizwe* cadres. When I was called upon to join the cadres, I was already a member of the Pan African Congress of Azania after having being inspired by the philosophy of Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe of Africanism. After realising that politics was full of tricks I quit and I was introduced to reggae by Ras elder Bafana (*Interview, Jah Power*, 07th January 2003).

This is the same position as that of Bongani Masuku whose politicisation was later followed by conversion to Rastafarianism. This informant indicates a profound disillusionment with formal politics. It seems to be a common sentiment since the general attitude towards politics and other religions is that Rastafarianism is a non-political and non-religious movement. This said most Rastafarians are not interested or involved in politics because they do not see political leaders as addressing real issues affecting the poor. Hence they do not vote.[59]

There is some disagreement on the progress made in the political, social and economic spheres of South Africa's development in the post-apartheid era. Some Rastafarians, particularly school goers, feel that progress has been made in education where the curriculum now reflects the aspirations of all population groups. Elders differ with youths (especially the school goers) because the former feel that little has been done to change the education system. They would prefer complete social change. Sister May on the other hand feels that the education

[58] See Appendix A.
[59] See Table 4.1.

system is not so bad (*Interview*, *Sister May,* 17th February 2003). Others express extreme views with regard to the question of whether the year 1994 brought with it positive changes, including the recognition of language rights. Jah Youth (who was 25 years at the time of the interview and falls under the category of youths), analyses the situation as thus:

> There is a few positive changes and more negatives. They say all languages are equals but is not the case. We can now sit in parks meant for whites before and enjoy fresh air. It was better before 1994 than now. Blacks were united during apartheid and there was respect for humankind. The youths were known to be leaders but now they are suffering unemployment that force them to do crime, and are also victims of age restriction at school (*Interview*, *Jah Youth*, 21st January 2003).

He expresses perceived discrimination and negative change in terms of actual language inequality, the loss of unity and solidarity among blacks with the end of apartheid, the youths' loss of prestige and a role in society, high unemployment rates, as well as the expulsion of disadvantaged youths over school-going age. Perhaps most notable of all is his regret for the loss of the youths' role in the struggle against apartheid.

Opinions differ widely with regard to attitude towards other religions. Some recognise other religious movements, particularly Christian African Traditional churches, and are tolerant of these compared to the mainstream Christian churches. There are also differences in perceptions between the orders in Daveyton. Members of *The House of Fire*, though divided on this issue, are generally opposed to other religious movements. Some recognise a connection between Rastafarianism and Christianity with some completely rejecting Christianity.[60] Members of *The Moden House,* on the other hand, show some tolerance towards Christianity.[61] There is thus no single common opinion or attitude towards other religions, which is why this issue is one of the most popular topics during *reasoning*.

[60] For more information on this, see section 5.1.2 of this thesis.
[61] An explanation for this may be found in their belief Jesus Christ and Prince Emmanuel as his reincarnate.

As is to be seen below and was hinted at above, one of the reasons they chose to be Rastafarians is that they reject the existing social order, so it is not surprising that their attitude towards society is negative. They see general society as going astray; and so it is their mission, as the chosen, one, to show it the light. Social ills, such as crime, alcohol, drug abuse and lack of respect for elders are singled out as some of the societal problems they think they were sent to eradicate. The seriousness of the problem of crime in South Africa is highlighted in the life history of Kebra Kim who had been a victim of violent crime in his life as indicated in the appendix.[62] Instead of solving these problems, they believe the government has become part of the problem. Their evidence is in the fact that government has legalised prostitution and homosexuality among others. According to Rastafarians, prostitution, homosexuality, drugs and alcohol abuse are the main causes of the spread of AIDS. They have a defined stance towards AIDS and the use of condoms. As pointed out by *Humbleness,* the only solution to the problem of AIDS for elders is to abstain from extramarital sexual activities. And as for the youth, there should be no sex before marriage. Rastafarians do not support the use of condoms as a way of combating the spread of HIV (*Interview*, *Humbleness*, 23rd September 2003).

What has been established is that Rastafarians experience themselves as marginalised, suffering from a loss of identity or collective belonging. They have been exposed to political ideas but have become disillusioned with formal politics and so distanced themselves from the overtly 'political'. They are highly critical of particular features of post 1994 South Africa, particularly regretting the loss of black unity and solidarity gained from the fight against apartheid. Depending on age, they lament the loss of youth prestige and power. Criticisms of the 'new' South Africa often expressed through moral condemnation and idea that the government supports immoral practices, such as premarital sex. Next, we turn to an exploration of how the decisions were made in the direction of Rastafarianism and of how the critiques of the social order are transmitted.

[62] Appendix A

In short, the table above illustrates that all Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* are under the age of 40 and that most of them (7 out of 11) grew up without both parents, or sometimes under the care of relatives. Educationally, the table shows that all informants are literate, all have primary school education with some having matric. From the table, only one informant has an education level below compulsory schooling, one informant has Grade 9, with three who made it as far Grade 11, and about four to matric. The table shows quite a high level of education with Bongani standing out as an example where Rastafarians were actually gifted students or intellectuals in some way.[63] It seems most of them have attained a relatively high level of education, enough to make them literate and appreciate the value of texts and of rational exercises such as reasoning.

Their narratives tell of stories experienced at school as religious persecution. An example is the life story of Sister Queen Fire discussed on page 213. We see a bright student persecuted for her beliefs (*Ibid:* 214). Another example is that of Jah Power. This is a case of someone who wanted to go further but could not and may have felt cheated (*Ibid:* 216). Their stories are laced with remarks on harassment by principals and teachers for example the case of Bongani (*Ibid:* 217). Perhaps they also did have higher educational aspirations that they feel they have been cheated.

In addition, the table indicates that the unemployment rate may have affected them, and that self-employment seems to be the solution for some. It is essential to point out that Bongani (who is not a member of the *House of Fire*) is the exception who combines employment and politics by his involvement in trade unions (*Ibid:* 218).

[63] Appendix A, p. 293 of this thesis.

| Place of Birth | Age | Family Background | Gender | Marital Status | Level of Education | Employment Status | Present Place of abode |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Qwaqwa | 27 | Grew-up under Grandmother | Male | Married | Std 9 | Self-employed | Maphupheni |
| Lesotho | 36 | Single parent (mother) | Male | Married | Std 7 | Self-employed | Daveyton |
| Daveyton | 34 | Grew-up under Grandmother | Male | Married | Std 9 | Sometimes works | Maphupheni |
| Daveyton | 23 | Single parent (mother) | Male | Single | Std 10 | Never worked | Daveyton |
| Daveyton | 24 | Single parent (mother) | Male | Married | Std 9 | Never worked | Daveyton |
| Daveyton | 18 | Growing-up under uncle | Female | Single | Doing Std 10 | Scholar | Daveyton |
| Kwa-Thema | 21 | Grew-up under both parents | Female | Married | Post-metric | Looking for work | Daveyton |
| Daveyton | 29 | Grew-up under both parents | Male | Married | Std 10 | Self-employed | Maphupheni (Daveyton) |
| Daveyton | 37 | Grew-up under both parents | Male | Married | Std 10 | Employed | Mandela (Daveyton) |
| Mpumalanga | 39 | Grew-up under both parents | Male | Married | Technical (Carpenter) | Self-employed | Maphupheni |
| Lydenburg | 36 | Growing-up under uncle | Male | Married | Std 6 | Self-employed | Maphupheni |

**Table 3:** Summary of Rastafarian biographical information.

### 5.2.5 Joining the Movement

Answering a question why he decided to become a Rastafarian, *Jah Youth* expresses personal disillusionment with social phenomena such as alcohol consumption of a male parent by declaring that:

> The reason I decided to become a Rastafarian came about when I compared my past with what I wanted in life. I did not want to end up like my father, an alcoholic and irresponsible parent. But, the main thing I think was to avoid drinking alcohol more than anything (*Interview*, *Jah Youth*, 21st January 2003).

This answer reflects Rastafarians' rejection of the existing social order in which alcohol consumption is a norm. Different reasons are given to the question of why they became Rastafarians. There is no doubt that social, economic and political injustices played a great role in determining their choice to become Rastafarians. For most, the main influence behind their decision was reggae music. Reggae lyrics are about social, economic and political injustices that they experienced. The impact of Reggae mainly occurred during the 1980's

orchestrated by reggae singers such as Peter Tosh, Don Carlos and Eric Donaldson (*Interview*, *Kebra*, 14th May 2003).

The smoking of *ganja* also played a major role in the ultimate choice Rastafarians made to convert to the Movement. Nearly all of them were smoking *ganja* before converting to Rastafarianism. Their coming together and sharing *ganja* had an influence, especially amongst those who were interested in the Movement (*see Appendix for evidence*). The sharing of *ganja* was usually accompanied by discussions about reggae and Rastafarianism. This sharing of *ganja* strengthens the ethic of sharing and assists in building a new identity and community.

The dance is another avenue opened for both Rastafarians and other interested people to come together and learn from each other. Apart from the fact that it makes contact possible amongst Rastafarians, it also attracts new members. The dance has been and still is the most important event in all the activities of Rastafarians. Most members of the *House of Fire* formally became Rastafarians with their move to, and settlement in Maphupheni. As the first person to learn more about the Movement, *Jah Power* was influential in teaching new members. Their settlement at Maphupheni also facilitated their conversion.

Although it is possible to generalise to some extent the reasons for becoming Rastafarians, these differ for each individual. Most youths and female members indicate their liking of the Rastafarian way of life as their reason for joining (*see Appendix*). This lifestyle includes non-violence, doing no crime and drugs, or drinking *Babylon water*. Whatever the reason, most individuals became interested in the Movement as early as the 1980's. They all considered themselves Rastafarians mainly because they wore dreadlocks, smoked *ganja*, and attended dances. This changed when they became organised into a *house* and made the sharing of information more possible, and enabled them to strengthen their awareness of their unique identity.

Thus, most Rastafarians started by wearing dreadlocks, smoking *ganja* and listening to reggae music before converting to Rastafarianism for example Kebra Kim.[64]

### 5.2.6 Diet

There is agreement amongst members that once one becomes a Rastafarian he/she must abide by some conventions that form the most important component of their identity. Most of them, especially those who are affiliated to any of the three houses do not eat *flash,* drink *Babylon water*, take drugs or smoke *Babylon sticks* and they show great contempt for anyone who uses these 'substances'. Such a person is not regarded a Rastafarians. Apart from not eating *flash*, they also do not eat any processed food: canned food, ice creams, or food with sugar or salt. This sometimes becomes a problem because according to all married men, every member of their families has to eat *ital* food. In some families such as that of Yellowman's it resulted in a conflict when he ended-up cooking his own food in a separate pot (*Interview, Yellowman, 27h February 2002*). The other problem is that of Sister May who still stays at home where all eat meat but her. While having to keep up a Rastafarian diet, parents send her to buy meat and she cannot refuse because Rastafarians must show respect by doing what parents ask of them *(Ibid, .09h January 2003*). There is, however, still a lot of confusion and disagreement over what Rastafarians should or should not eat.[65]

### 5.2.7 Rastafarian Populace in Daveyton

It is very difficult to establish the exact number of Rastafarians in Daveyton because of the fluidity of the Movement. Only the *House of Fire* has a formal structure, with known and registered members. The other two houses are in the process of constituting themselves into formal structures. The majority of those who call themselves Rastafarians are, however, not affiliated to any of the three *houses* or who can be called conventional Rastafarians as they do not feel bound

[64] Appendix A,

[65] The issue of diet is very important that members are always reminded of it every Sabbath and sometimes it becomes a topic for *reasoning (*See 6.2 on the question of diet).

by all of the religious decrees of particular houses. Apart from wearing dreadlocks, the three colours, and smoking *ganja,* they have little in common with the organised Rastafarians.

The conventional Rastafarians consist mainly of people who belong to the middle and working class,[66] and students. They tend to be more secular than spiritual in conviction and practice. Since this group hardly meets for any reason, it is very difficult to estimate their numbers because they are a fluid group.[67] Unlike other groups, they are not confined to a particular section of Daveyton, but are spread all over the township. Yet they form a source from which organised *houses* get their new recruits. This group consists of those Rastafarians who express their identity through their physical appearance, playing reggae music and sometimes attending dances. Their knowledge of the Movement tends to be limited to what they hear from music since they seldom attend any other gathering.

It needs to be emphasised that it is also difficult to know the exact number of organised Rastafarians. The *House of Fire* may have anything between twenty to fifty members. This number is mainly based on the register that members sign every time they congregate. However, it always fluctuates, so it is not easy to establish the base number by following the count in the registers, since not all members are registered. In some instances, some register for one year and do not register the next year due to lack of registration money.

The second largest group consists of those affiliated to the *Moden House*. Because this house is involved in organising dances, it is the most popular among the youths. The *Moden House* is thus not so much concerned with social, spiritual, economic or political matters, as with entertaining society and expressing their identity through music and dance. Again, it is difficult to know the exact number of Rastafarians falling under the two categories because they are not registered by

[66] It should be noted that conventional Rastafarians do not believe in formal employment and cannot be classified as a working class.

[67] Their perception of themselves as true Rastafarians emanates from their conviction that congregation is part of *Babylon* and that Rastafarianism is open-ended.

any central body and do not meet officially to worship. Estimating their numbers by attendance to dances is misleading since, the dances are attended by people from other townships and by fans who are not Rastafarians.

## 5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued that Rastafarians in Daveyton do not represent one cohesive organisation. Four types of Rastafarians can be identified. The most important of these is the *House of Fire* (the most organised). The other two houses, the *Moden House* and the *Milchezedec Order* are still in the process of constituting themselves into a formal organisation; they still have to gather information on a constitution, find a place to gather, and devise their own practices that will further distinguish them as a group with a unique identity. They still have to identify who the priests will be, especially the *Milchezedec order* because it must have seven priests. As for seven wives, the possibility of having that number of women remains to be seen. One major difference between the *House of Fire* and the other two is that those of the *House of Fire* can be seen to have reached the last stage of their growth, namely, that of establishing some sort of a church and establishing some contact with other Rastafarians belonging to the same order. Rastafarianism is intimately connected to the social, economic and political conditions of post-apartheid South Africa, especially in Daveyton. Rastafarians are extremely critical of what they perceive to be the immorality of the new order in South Africa, and are often nostalgic of the days when the fight against apartheid bound all black people as one 'kindred'. They try to reach out to international and pan-Africanist movements against colonialism and slavery.

The Rastafarian life narratives researched in this thesis show that Rastafarianism is more than channelling religious feelings; it is an elected way of life. Most Rastafarians seem to have had a similar upbringing under unfavourable social, economic, political, religious and family circumstances. As a result, their coming together under Rastafarianism is a way of finding an alternative form of solidarity within the community and of dealing with common experiences, which continue

as current problems. Their similar political, social and economic backgrounds; their perception or interpretations of the world around them; their belief in eating a special diet make it easy and necessary to spend time together and to be in constant dialogue with each other. They come together for religious purposes, to provide a platform for discussing common feelings and social issues.

In addition to the general social, economic and political issues raised in this thesis that contributed to the emergence of Rastafarianism, personal circumstances such as family background and peer influence do seem to have played a significant role in a member's consequent decision to concert to Rastafarianism. The fact that most Rastafarians are from broken families has forced them to gravitate towards one another. In the absence of good family backgrounds, friends took over the function of shaping individual identities. Subsequently a group identity emerged.

This chapter has dealt with issues of culture and identity as defined in this thesis. It has sought to evaluate the millenarian aspects of Rastafarianism. These are urther dealt with in the next chapter in addition to how Rastafarians conduct congregational business specifically at the *House of Fire*.

# CHAPTER SIX

## Gatherings

This chapter attempts to widen the understanding of the belief systems of Rastafarians through observing their activities during gatherings. This helps to establish the type of salvation they envisage and is done by interpreting songs, the anthems and the creed, which accompany gatherings. It seeks to determine the extent to which Rastafarianism can or cannot be categorised as a Millenarian movement, how Rastafarians express their identity and locate themselves in contemporary South African. As mentioned in the first chapter, this interpretation is based on the methodology of James (1999) and Coplan (1994; 1985). Data was obtained mainly through participant observation, follow-up interviews, and a few written primary materials.

This chapter is an account of how Rastafarians of Daveyton come together. The Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* have been gathering for a long time. A great part of this chapter is written on information observed from their activities.[68] The *House of Fire* is the focus in this chapter because unlike the other two houses, they have a ground where they gather (during *grounation*). Issues addressed include, what types of gatherings take place? When do they take place? What is their importance? What activities take place during each gathering?

Coming together or gathering is an important aspect of Rastafarians' lifestyle. It is another way of expressing and exploring their existence as a group with its own identity. Gathering can be for spiritual purposes, which takes the form of an official congregation, such as the Sunday sermon amongst Christians. This type of gathering, the most important of all gatherings, is called *grounding* or

[68] It must be noted that there is no difference in the way the three *orders* conduct their gathering. The only difference is that the other two houses prefer to say their prayers wearing their turbans.

*grounation,* which only true Rastafarians attend. Attending dances and dance halls are the oldest form of gatherings. They are meant not only for Rastafarians but also for other members of society. There are also official gatherings that take the form of regional, provincial and national executive meetings, where administrative matters are usually discussed. There are also unofficial gatherings such as family gatherings.

Each type of gathering is important in its own way in making it possible for Rastafarians to make and maintain contact with each other. This chapter looks at organisation, events and functions, when these gatherings take place, as well as their meaning and importance for Rastafarians and non-Rastafarians.

## 6.1 *Groundation*

The word *grounation* is derived from the word 'ground', which means the place where Rastafarian gatherings take place for spiritual purposes. In other words, where the divine assembly takes place. Among members of the *House of Fire,* the ground is also known as the *binghi*. The *Jahug* describes the process of *grounation*:

> [as]a congregation of Rastafari in *Ivine Issemble* which is the serious and sincere duty of the Nyabhinghi Order which commemorates the origin coming together to chant down Babylon and to give Jah glory. For one man alone is but a voice in the wilderness, but the congregation of man is omnipotent (*Jahug, 1992:* 5).

*Grounation* is important for two reasons: it should bring Rastafarians together to praise Jah and to fight down oppression. There are rules governing the ground where *grounation* takes place. For instance, no person afflicted with any form of disease is permitted to be among the congregation. Strangers are barred and the use of cameras is prohibited unless authorised by the *House*. In the *House of Fire,* women are expected to cover their heads while men must remove their turbans before they enter the ground. As was noted, the removal of turbans is the main cause of disagreement between the House of Fire and the other two *houses*.



**Photograph 1:** Just finished preparing and (the priest at the centre) they are still waiting for other members to arrive. Note the green, yellow and red flag, and the portrait of Bob Marley on the background, two bowls for putting herbs and the priest at the centre holding *ganja.* (*Photograph – Midas H Chawane Maphupheni, 04 January 2003*).

There is no specific day when *grounation* is supposed to be held; this will differ from each *house* and time.[69] For example, The *Moden House* meets, on Thursdays. As for the *House of Fire*, the day of gathering has always been a problem. At first, *grounation* was held on Sundays. This date was later changed to Saturday (in accordance with all other branches) and then to Sundays again (*Observation*, *04th January 2003*). The reason the date was changed to Sundays was because most members who are working are always late or unable to attend.

In the beginning, a tent was hired and used as a shelter for functions. As time went by, a temporary one-room *zozo* (prefabricated structure) was built to serve as a gathering place and a storage room for drums. The *zozo* sometimes serves as accommodation for Rastafarians who do not have a home. However most of the

[69] This is in spite of the fact that thet *Jahug* stipulate that that Sabath should be observed. The reason for gathering on any day is because Sarturday is not a convenient day for all.

time it is unoccupied except when it is used as a tabernacle. When used as a tabernacle, it is prepared according to the Nyabhinghi guidelines. At the centre is a table which is an *alter* covered in a red, gold and green cloth and surrounded by chairs where members sit during gatherings. A plate of *ganja*, herbs, and a portrait of Selassie, a bowl of fruits, bibles and study materials on Rastafarianism that are used during congregation are placed on the table (*Ibid*).

On the ground there is also a round tabernacle made of poles still under construction – the most important structure. This was built following the Nyahbinghi Order guidelines with twelve outer posts representing the Twelve Patriarchs, the twelve gates of New *Jerusalem,* the Twelve Tribes of Israel, and the Twelve Apostles. At the centre, is the largest post of all which represents: *Ian'I Ivine Majesty*, that is, Emperor Haile Selassie I who is the head of the Nyahbinghi Order. The roof of the tabernacle takes the shape of an umbrella.[70] At its centre there is an alter made of six outer-posts surrounding a centre post. This symbolises the Book of the Seven Seals, the Seven Golden Candlesticks.[71] This is evidence of the Judao-Christian influences.

Priest *Binghi Bunny* and *Kingman* mostly preside at the alter. There are rules governing how members should behave inside the tabernacle. For example, no eating is allowed inside and the inner section of the alter. This area should not be used for any other purpose other than those related to the *binghi,* such as a storage of documents. When it was finally occupied in July 2002, the tabernacle brought much awaited relief because not all members attending *grounation* could be accommodated in the temporary structure. Its occupation also brought in some financial relief because it served as a venue for the monthly East Rand meetings. In addition, instead of hiring a tent each time they had a big gathering, the new tabernacle was used (*Observation, 04th January 2003*). The process of *grounation* is

[70] The roof was to be covered with thatch which was cut by volunteers from the *house* on Sundays when there will be no any *Binghi* (*Jahug,* 1992: 44).

[71] The Rastafari of Daveyton do not like similar movements that use candles during their church service because they claim that Rastafari is their light and they do not need any other light.

divided into three sessions, which Rastafarians of Daveyton refer to as *churchical, reasoning* and *governmental.*

### 6.1.1 *Churchical or Ises*

This is the first session of *grounation*; it is characterised by singing, drumming and dancing. As the words *churchical* or *ises* suggest, it is a sort of church sermon where Rastafarians give praises to *Jah*. The first members to arrive prepare the venue, the chairs and table as well as the drums for the gathering. If it is a cold day, a fire is made and the drums warmed around it.[72] While waiting for other members to arrive those present (if they are more than five) start singing the *churchical* chants and beating of drums. The chants that are sung during *grounation* are common to Rastafarians internationally and are supposed to be known by heart by all who claim to be true Rastafarians.

Originally, there were about 133 chants. This number has been growing. Talented and inspired members of the faith created them during the early days of the Movement. The *Sankeys* (hymnbook) and African American spirituals were re-rewritten and their beat rearranged to fit the philosophy and the heartbeat of the Nyahbinghi ceremonies (*Jahug*, 1992: 7). Some of the chants were taken from Christian hymns and tailored to fit Rastafarian belief system (especially those that praise Haile Selassie). That is why some chants refer to personalities in the Bible, such as Moses and Aaron, amongst others. Different types of chants categorised by Rastafarians themselves are sung, for example, chants for redemption, revival, *ises*, judgment, repatriation, love or togetherness, burials and sanctifications (*Observation*, 27th December 2003). A chant is explained before or after singing for the benefit of new members or visitors. Most of the chants are easy to sing because they relate to the life world of Rastafarians; they are usually short. A sample of the most popular chants is in the Appendix. Below is an explanation[73] of some of the most favourite chants usually sung during the *churchical* session.

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[72] This is to harden the skin for better sound.

[73] The explanation is from members themselves. A chant can be explained before or after singing, depending on the necessity of the explanation, or members can understand a chant by listing to the shout that accompanies its singing.

Redemption songs are also called liberation or emancipation songs; they call for the destruction of Babylon. An example of a redemption song is Chant 1 entitled *Him have to Move.* It is one of the most popular chants in the House of Fire. The chant is about the enemies of Rastafari that when he (Rastafari) gets in or takes-over, they will scatter and be destroyed. These enemies are Pope Paul of the Roman Catholic Church[74], Queen Elizabeth as the representative of the British Empire, Babylon, *Downpressors*[75] and apartheid. It does not matter whether you are black or white, rich or poor as long as you are the enemy of Rastafari you will be destroyed. Another redemption song is Chant 3 entitled *Burn Down Colonialism*. Although it is only three lines, this chant is invariably repeated for more than five minutes. The singing of redemption songs is accompanied by the Nyahbinghi dance with performers dancing and jumping in a circle. The singing, dancing and jumping is accompanied by shouts and calls for the destruction of all the wicked people, a common redemption vision of whites driven to the sea, as in the example of Nongqawuse's vision (*Observation, 27th December 2003*).

The other most popular redemption song is chant (85) entitled 400 *Years*. This chant is popular in the houses of Daveyton; it has been sung by reggae superstars, amongst them Peter Tosh. It is about slavery and colonialism, which kept black people under oppression for more than 400 years. Blacks have over the past 400 years been burning Babylon (fighting *downpression)* without stopping and they will continue to keep the fire burning until Babylon is destroyed.

Revival chants, according to Rastafarians, are spiritual and remind them of their past and the main aim of Rastafarianism which is to go to Zion (repatriation) and the triumph of Zion over Babylon. Chant number *(*23*) Babylon a Follower* can be described as both a redemption and revival chant. It is about the oppressor who is always following Rastafarians wherever they go, and complains that Jah did not

[74] The Pope is seen as a representative of a religion that has collaborated with the Italian government of Mussolini when Italy invaded Itheopia just before the outbreak of the Second World War. It should be noted that Christianity (represented by the Pope) and capitalism (represented by the Britain and the United State) collude in the oppression of blacks.

[75] Note the play of words where the oppressor is called the *downpressor* because according to Rastafarian language you can only press a person down.

send anybody to watch and spy on them. It is also a revival song because it talks about heaven (Holy Mount Zion), saying that Babylon can follow them to a certain point because when they enter Mount Zion he cannot enter.

Revival chants are also about the past glory of Africa, *Ithiopia* or black people. Chant 10 entitled *Proud to be Black* is an example of a revival song. Priest Bingy Bunny explains the meaning of the chant as follows:

> The chant tells *I n I* to be proud of our past because as Rastafarians and black people *I n I* traces *I n I* roots to Moses, Aaron, King Solomon and Queen of Sheba who were black. It is about the glorious past of Africa and her contribution in civilization by building the first university of Sankore in Ancient Mali and invention of medicine by Imhotep in Ancient Egypt (*Interview, Binghi Bunny, 16$^{h}$ August 2003*).

Another revival chant is number 31 *Children of Africa.* This one is a declaration by Rastafarians that they have their *rootical foundation* (origin) in Ancient Africa, and that because of that they must *inite* (unite). In glorifying Africa's past: the readings, writings, mathematics, science and civilisation are seen to have their origin in Africa. Chants *(7) Leave Babylon, (24) Ithiopians are you Ready,* and *(96) Babylon Throne Gone Down* are some of the songs which sing about repatriation. It must be said that repatriation for Rustafarians does not mean to physically leave Babylon but to change the life one is living. Therefore, these chants are about mental repatriation from bad living to good living. It must also be noted that these chants were compiled during the time when repatriation meant 'Back to Africa' from Jamaica, hence their call for Rastafarians to leave Babylon physically.

Some chants are also meant to provoke self-reflection with overtones of Judao-Christian practices relating to self-sacrifice, introspection and repentance. However, Rastafarian chants are different because of their political content. Chant number 7 is an example of such chants. According to *Wiseprophet*, the chant is a call to all Rastafarians to analyse their lives to discover that they are living unclean lives, are oppressed and harassed by Babylon. This condition, it suggests, prevailed a long time ago. Even under Selassie, the same oppression and harassment took place. The solution to this problem is to move out of

Babylon and go to Mount Zion without caring what people will say (*Interview, Wiseprophet, 16th August 2003*). Chant 24 asks black people if they are ready to leave Babylon when the morning star starts shining. The chant *Babylon Throne Gone Down,* according to *Wiseprophet*, was popularised by Bob Marley (*Ibid*). The chant is about the fall of Babylon Kingdom and the return of Rastafarians to Mount Zion. The fall of the Kingdom was announced by the Rasta man and is signalled by the Angel John (the Baptist) seen holding the Seven Seals and singing that Babylon's Kingdom has fallen (*Ibid*).

Chants 13 *Gonna be Fire* and 21 *Is your Name Written There?,* are examples of what they call *judgment duty*. Unlike the Christian notion that talks about the end of the world and ascending to heaven, Rastafarians see judgment as a secular event that takes place during their lifetime. According to chant 13, the wicked will be destroyed by fire, and are paying for all their sins to other people. The fire is not a real fire but symbolises the power of Jah and punishment. Rastafarians believe that when you do bad things, fire will burn you, which means that bad things will happen to you. Fire is seen as a symbol of punishment that *Jah* uses against evildoers (*Observation, 29th June 2002*).

Love and togetherness are very central in the lives and beliefs of Rastafarians, which is sometimes expressed in singing. The chants that aim at promoting love and togetherness are chants 20 *One Black Love* and *75 Get Together.* When singing these chants the mood is not the same as when singing redemption or judgement chants. They are sung at the end of the gathering, when members stand in a circle holding hands; there is no dancing (*Ibid*).

The singing of chants goes hand in hand with the beating of drums. The drums are very important and *grounation* cannot take place without them. They are played by experienced people, and are played according to a specific beat. Those who want to learn how to play them do so in their own time. There are three drums and their nature and the way they are played is described as follows:

> trinity of drums, the repeater (akete/kete) which speaks or sings, the fundi or fundeh which syncopates, and the bass drum which keeps the heartbeat of the

> music, has evolve as the musical instruments of the Nyahbinghi Order. The bass carries the two beats, the heartbeat (one, two) in accord with the fundeh which says 'do good' or 'one two'. The repeater (the speaker) repeats the notes in accordance with the bass and the fundeh (*Jahug, 1992:7, 44).*

As an important part of observance, the process of drumming, singing and dancing are, according to the *Jahug,* believed to produce a natural vibration filled with positive messages of black redemption and liberation. These bear popular themes of harmony, justice, equality, peace and love (*Ibid*). That is why members of the *House of Fire* are encouraged to sing and play drums aloud to give praise to Jah.[76] Singing continues until there are enough members to open the proceedings officially. The official openning is marked by the singing of the *Ithiopian* Anthem, followed by the recitation of Psalms 1, 121,122,133 and 24, and the recitation of the Nyahbinghi Creed (*Observation, 06th April 2002*).[77]

The singing of the Anthem is accompanied by the beating of drums, and is done with more respect than the singing of chants. During the singing of the Anthem, there should be no dancing and everybody should stand still. Those who are late and find the singing in progress should not enter the tabernacle. They must wait outside until the anthem, Psalms and the creed have ended. On entering, latecomers have to greet the person who is on the floor (priest of the day) by touching clenched fists, and the priest will in turn do the same to the person sitting next to him. This will continue until the circle is completed by the person on the floor, who will return the greetings to the latecomer (*Observation 2nd February 2002*).

Members are expected to take part in singing and recitation of the Anthem, Psalms and the Creed. Copies to assist new members to learn these are distributed. These chants should be memorised by each member, Psalms and Creed. According to Priest Binghi Bunny, this is to show respect to His *Ivine* Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I (*Interview, Binghi Bunny, 16th August 2003*).

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[76] The dance that accompanies singing and drumming is known as the Nyabhinghi dance and other Rastafarians believe that whites cannot be Rastafarians because they don't think whites can see them doing this dance.

[77] For the creed, anthem and the Psalms see Appendix B.

The days of the 27 December 2003 and the 03 January 2004 were set aside for the explanation of the Anthem, the Psalms and the Creed to those who do not know them. Explaining the importance of singing the Anthem, Binghi Bunny says that it is to honour or praise *Ithiopia,* Rastafarians, and black people in general. This helps them to focus on the task of the day and to ask for blessings from Rastafari. All must stand tall and firm with hands forming a heart like sign during singing.

> The sign symbolises a number of things. It symbolises both peace and war. It represents the heart and the spear. It is also taken to represent Africa and sometimes used in greeting instead of closed fists (*Ibid*).

The interpretation is not given by any specific person but is open to all members to explain their meaning according to their own understanding. The priests only facilitate the process by asking questions. On 23 October 2003, in my presence, the priest asked the importance of *Ithiopia* and the meanings of the three colours. Wiseprophet responded in this way:

> *Ithiopia* refers to ancient Africa and is seen as Eden where life started and where such things as civilization and order started. The swift clouds bring rain and life and they symbolise Rastafarians who are gathered around Jah throne. About the symbolisation of the three colours, the red stands for blood and it symbolises the innocent blood shared by blacks during slavery and colonial times. The gold stands for wealth or riches and it symbolises Africa's resources and her charity. The green represents plants or life and is a symbol of hope, when you put a seed on the soil you do so with the hope that it germinate and grow. Because Jah leads *I n I* from darkness to light and shield *I n I* from wrong, *I n I* shall sing Him *ises (Interview, Wiseprophet, 23rd October 2003*).

Wiseprophet's response makes an interesting point. He makes the comparison between Ethiopia and Eden. Both are cited as the origin of life and of 'civilisation'.

The second verse of the anthem is a chorus that praises Selassie as King of Kings or The Most High (Negus) who makes sure that *Ithiopia* maintains her freedom in order to progress with truth, right, love and light. Emphasis is on the fact that there is only one *Jah* from whom all *imanity* (humanity) appeal to and that is H.I.M. The third verse is a reminder to Rastafarians that Jah is always present with us but mankind sometimes cannot realise this. Jah is asked to give to all

Rastafarians of this time (today) that ancient knowledge and voice from the *ancient* (past). As *Jah* has spoken in the *ancient,* He still speaks in these times with the same voice but the message can only be heard by all Rastafarians. The phrase '*Ithiopians now stretch forth their hands'* is taken from the Bible, and according to it, all nations of the world are seen going to *Ithiopia* for salvation and in this way breaking the boundaries that divide and separate them. Mount Zion refers to *Itiopia* and within the context of the anthem; it means heaven. This is not a place but is the highest state of *livity* and thinking. Thus, Africa should be blessed in whatever she does (*Interview, Jah Youth and Observation, 06th January 2001*).

The last verse sees *Ithiopia* becoming victorious against her enemies and those of Rastafarians who fought so hard to see her on her knees. Blacks who are scattered all over the world are calling, their calls heard, and with the spirit of love, all Rastafarians are urged to become one throughout the coming years (*Ibid*). This description and analysis of the Anthem confirms that at least one aspect of Rastafarianism does resemble movements that have been characterised as millenarian, with a day of judgment envisaged witnessing the destruction of all evildoers, and the reunion and salvation of the faithful in an emphatically African landscape. Note below the very wide range of those who may fall into the category of evildoers.

The singing of the anthem is followed by the recitation of Psalms. The Psalms, though taken from the Bible are very different because they have adapted to fit Rastafarian language and beliefs. In addition, their interpretation differs from the original meanings. According to priest Binghi Bunny, Psalm 1 speaks about *I n I* and does not speak about the nation. It is noteworthy that the idea of nation is rejected, because the Psalm is about how man and man, not nations, should live on earth. It is about good and bad that humankind can be (*Interview, Binghi Bunny, 16 August 2003*). Members of the house added to this by describing the council of the ungodly as people such as:

> losers, carnal mind people, bad company, group of rebellious people, gangster people, the anti-Christ people, anti-Binghi, those fighting against Rastafari or those fighting against good. An example of these councillors is the Pope and his

> company, the present government because they pass laws to legalize abortion, and the Pentagon (*Observation. 16th February 2002*).

Wiseprophet interprets the line that reads *and shall be like tree planted…* as:

> To youths *sitted* amongst elders getting knowledge that will be used and passed on to the next generation. The tree is a Rasta man or woman and water is knowledge and those without this knowledge do not have a standpoint and they are a type of people who moves from one church to another. The tree that is planted by the waters will always grow and bear fruits while the one without water will die or will bear rotten fruits. There is no mixing between the good and the bad because the bad will perish and the good will prosper (*Interview, Wiseprophet, 23rd October 2003).*

Psalm 121 brings togetherness to humanity and it speaks of Rastafari (the creator of heaven on earth) from whom help to Rastafarians will come. The earth is seen to consist of the ground where we live as well as our bodies. Heaven consists of the way we live and think. Psalm 122 is a prayer and praise for *Ithiopia* where Rastafarians get joy in going to and settling in this land. *Ithiopia* is a city where Jah stays and sits on the throne that was passed down from King David. As a prayer, it asks for prosperity for those who love *Ithiopia*, for peace inside its walls and its palaces, and for love amongst those who dwell within it. Psalm 133 gives thanks for the blessing that Jah showered upon Rastafarians and expresses joy, love and unity under which they live. This Psalm is interpreted as encouraging Rastafarians to grow their dreadlocks and beards. Love and *inity* is likened to an ointment that is poured on the dreadlocks and down the beards, and this is likened to the dew of Harmony descending from the mountain of Zion (*Observation, 16th February 2002*).

Psalm 24 is about *iration* (creation) and the *judgement duty* (judgement day). Haile Selassie is seen, not only as the creator of the earth and the seas but as the earth, the world and everything that lives on it. He is the creator of the seas. Only the righteous will see the judgement day. We all will pay for our transgression here on earth and the wicked will never receive their blessing from Jah. The Psalm calls all Rastafarians to look for help from Jah and to open their hearts to receive Him. The *House of Fire* changed the original version of the last part of the Psalm in order to accommodate women. Instead of repeating the line *lifts up your heads*

*o'yeh black man ... Who is this King of Zion*? Haile I Selassie, it says *o'ye black oman* (woman)... *Who is this mother of iration*? Empress Menen I" (*Ibid*).

Nyahbinghi Creed comes after the Psalms. It is a summary of Rastafarians' pleas to Jah. There is disagreement about what Egypt stands for since it is located on the African contintent. Some believe that it is associated with slavery and that leaders of blacks will come out of this place of slavery. Other opinions are that:

> Egypt is not an evil place and it refers to Africa and should not be abused or accused by Christians who tell us that the Pharaohs were bad Kings. It should not be seen as a terrible place. The Creed means that the Kings and Queens will come from Egypt and we are Egyptians (*Interview, Wiseprophet, 23rd October 2003).*

Of all the nations of the world, *Ithiopians* are the ones who will open their hearts to *Jah* and let His spirit dwell within them. It asks for forgiveness from Jah since no man is perfect in *iration* and to learn to forgive others and not pass judgement.

> As Rastafarians, we must learn to love and be loyal. Love, loyalty, knowledge and *overstanding* manifest itself in the mind and Jah blessed them with these to enable them to do his will. The Creed also tells us what our responsibility is to other people. Where it says let the hungry be fed... is the reflection of the perpetual state of things human beings find themselves. There is always unemployment that is the main cause of lack of food and clothing. Rastafarians are thus called upon to work hard in order to provide food and cloth for the hungry and naked just like the Moslems are doing (*Ibid*).

Rastafarians agreed that their aim should be to feed themselves first before they start feeding others. For the sick, today there is the problem of AIDS, with many orphans. The sick need counselling, and by giving counselling, Rastafarians will be nourishing them with knowledge to help them cope with this problem. The Creed also asks for protection from Jah against all enemies and their destruction (*Observation, 03rd January 2004).*

### 6.1.2 *Reasoning*

After the completion of the Creed, they all join hands in a circle and sing, after which everyone must sit, when the process of reasoning starts.

> *Reasoning* is the cornerstone of Rastafari within the Nyahbinghi Order. Through Word Sound Power I an' I can bring judgement to pass, therefore I an' I have no need for weapons (Jahug, 1992: 7).

*Reasoning* is an *ad hoc* dialogue on virtually any topic, ranging from religion or the Bible, politics, education, social problems, ancient African history, current news, *ganja*, love and hatred – anything that the house may agree to discuss or that may arise from the *house*. With the aid of the Bible, newspapers and other written material, *reasoning* entails critical reflection on Eurocentric ideologies and evils that are manifest among humankind. Its importance to the *House of Fire* is that members should see, do and believe in one thing so that when asked individually about their Movement, they should give more or less similar answers *(Observation, 08 March 2002).*

The choice of the topic to be discussed is dependent on a number of things, such as the Rastafarian calendar or current news affecting Rastafarians. An example is the month of February — an internationally known as Black History Month. In this case, *reasoning* centres around the issue of tracing the history of blacks from ancient, slave and colonial times to the present. Deeds and lives of great African kings, queens and leaders are remembered. Africa's ancient glories, her struggle against slavery and colonialism are also discussed. Members come with material dealing with African history. Thus during the entire month of February *reasoning* is focused on Black History. Events are held throughout the country in celebration and some members from the *house* attend conferences and bring materials back to the *house* for discussion. Jah Power attended one such celebration with Kingman in Johannesburg in 2002, who brought a paper delivered by Dr. Kgalushi Koka[78] entitled *The Concept of the Black Star and Pan Afrikan Unity: Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X, and Mangaliso Sobukwe.* Photocopies were made available to facilitate further discussions.

Discussion on Dr. Koka's paper asked questions such as: What do you know about these great leaders? Where are they from? What are their philosophies? Different answers are given until the correct one is received. The one who

[78] Dr. Koka is held at high esteem by the Rastafarians of Daveyton and they all agree that he should be supported in every workshop he organises. This is mainly due to his ideals on Pan Africanism which Rastafari is also preaching.

brought the document usually gives the correct answer. In cases of unknown answers or disagreement, members are asked go home and do research.



**Photograph 2**: Rastafarians performing during the Black History Month. (*Photograph – Midas H Chawane Rolihlahla Community Hall, Etwatwa*, 12 February 2003).

Those bringing materials from the conference highlight the most relevant sections of the paper and read it to the *house* for discussion. An extract from Nkrumah's speeches was read out as follows:

> There is a battle to be fought; there are obstacles to be overcome. There is a world struggle for human dignity to be won. Let us address ourselves seriously to the supreme task that lie(s) ahead. To accomplish these aims, **AFRICA MUST UNITE** (Koka, 1985: 10).

The above quote raised the following questions: what battle is referred to? What obstacles are referred to? How are these obstacles going to be overcome? Answers are given by anyone in the house according to his/her understanding. For some the battle is against evil, for some against hunger, illiteracy or ignorance, but the obstacle, they all agree on, is Babylon or the system. The only way to overcome these obstacles is to *chant down* Babylon. The last sentence of

the quote was debated at length, and the cause of the debate was whether Africa must unite first or first accomplish the aims and then unite. Those who argue that Africa must first unite see the lack of unity as one obstacle to it. Those of a different opinion argue that Babylon is the cause of the division and that Africa will never be united until the battle is won. Emphasising why the topic was important, Binghi Bunny said the purpose of this topic is to educate *ones* and *ones* about African heritage (*Observation, 14th June 2002; Interview, Binghi Bunny, 16th August 2003*).

The 26th of April of every year is an important date for the Rastafarian movement and is celebrated all over the world. This was the date when Haile Selassie visited Jamaica. It also marks the fulfilment of Marcus Garvey's prophecy. *Reasoning* during this day centred around what happened when Selassie visited Jamaica on 26 April 1966 of the coming of the Black Messiah. For the *House of Fire,* the 26th was going to be on a Friday and it was decided that day be celebrated on 20th April 2002. The priest initiated the discussions. He asked if anyone in the house knew anything about the visit. In the absence of responses, he started to read from a number of documents.

On 14 June 2003, the topic brought for *reasoning* was ancestors, that is, the question of whether Rastafarians should worship them or not. It poses the question of the relationship between Rastafarianism and African 'traditional' religion beliefs. *Reasoning* took the form of question and answer. Below is a sample of how the session went:

> **QUESTION**: What are ancestors or *Amadlozi* in Zulu and *Badimo* in Sotho?
>
> **ANSWERS**: They have something to do with the slaughtering of goats and visiting the graveyard things that Rastafarians should not do. It is something we cannot see and we do not know. The *Sangomas* (traditional doctors) are the ones who believe and work for them. It is the spirit of the dead. A difference should be made between witchdoctors and bush

doctors. A *bush doctor* is someone who is using pure herbs to cure other people's sicknesses while witchdoctors use animal organs not only to help but also to harm other people.

**QUESTION:** Why should *I n I* worship or not worship them?
**ANSWERS:** This question is a tricky one. There are similarities between ancestral worship and Christianity. They both deal with telling people about their future and worship spirits of dead people; hence, for us they are "dead religions". In contrast to this, Rastafarianism does not deal with spirits, but our Jah comes in flash and it is not possible for anyone to know what the future holds. We know how evil comes. That is why we no *nyam flash* and salt, they contain evil spirits. Accordingly, Rastafarians should not kill and in the works of *Amadlozi* they slaughter animals, *nyam flash* and drink *Babylon water*.

**QUESTION:** Do *I n I* have ancestors and do *I n I* believe in them?
**ANSWERS:** There are ancestors for Rastafarians and we do not believe in them or worship them but we remember them. Our ancestors are our heroes like Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X, Robert Sobukwe and Martin Luther to mention a few.

**QUESTION:** When we talk about ancestors, what is the relationship between them and angels?
**ANSWERS:** According to *iration*, it is *Jah* on top, and then there are angels who are sent by him, and ancestors are for after life. As for ancestors, there are good and bad ones, which mean that if you lived a clean life you will be a good ancestor, people will draw some inspiration from you. If you lived badly, you only bring bad memories to people living after you. Angels are the righteous ones, people like us who have been sent by *Jah* to teach people to do good so that they can become good angels. Therefore, angels are not the Christian ones with wings mentioned in the

> Bible, and for human beings to be angels; they must graduate to that stage. The stage is called the Angelic stage that is a perfect state, perfect in uttering, doing and everything. "As it was in the beginning, *Jah* created sons and daughters (men and women) so what we are fighting for is repatriation of mind to live a perfect ancient *livity*. Man, angels and ancestors are one like the world that is one, that is why you cannot tell where ancestors and angels live because they in man who has attained perfection. They live within our hearts and minds," *(Observation, 14 June 2002).*

From the account above, Rastafarians' conceptualisation of angels and ancestors differs from Christian and African traditional beliefs. Angels are not understood in the same way as in Christianity, that is, as messengers of God. Ancestors are conceived beyond and outside of the ethnic or clan connotation. By rejecting the Christian conceptualisation of angels, African beliefs in ancestors and by conceiving these beyond ethnic and clan connotations, Rastafarians of Daveyton are thus reaching out for a more pan-African source of unity and ancestry.

Sometimes the topic of the day can become more religious, especially when it is about love, togetherness or repatriation. In this case, the Bible plays a major role during *reasoning*. Someone wanting to read relevant verses from the Bible or recite a poem can sometimes interrupt discussions. For example, on 26 July 2003 the topic was about love and *inity.* Isaiah 43 *Jah Promise to Rescue I n I* and Jeremiah 23: *Hope for the Future* were read and they show that "*repatriation is a must.* They show that *inity* is very important for *I and I* for repatriation to take place, and that preparation in a form of collecting knowledge, *iverstanding* and *ital livity* is of outmost importance," (*Interview, Wiseprophet, 23rd October 2003*). Corinthians 13, *Love* is perhaps the most popular topic (*Observation, 26th July 2003*). It is about what love is and what it is not and that love is the most important thing. Thus:

> If I have no love I am nothing. I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burnt - but if I have no, this does me no good ...Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith, hope and

> patience never fail...Meanwhile these three remains: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love (*Good News Bible*).

The most important thing about reasoning is that it allows all members of the Movement to express themselves by asking and answering questions. Youths are encouraged to ask questions where they do not understand, and sometimes they are asked questions to show that they understand. When asking or answering questions, they indicate this by raising a hand. When talking, they should stand up and should first greet all by shouting *Haile Jah*. Other members respond by saying *Rastafari Selassie I the 1st*. The same greeting is repeated before sitting down to show that one has finished talking (*Observation, 2 February 2002*). Reasoning stops at 16:00 after topics for discussion for the next *strong* (session) are proposed and approved. The session is officially closed following the same procedure when opening. After closure the treasurer collects donations which are used to buy *ital* for the next *strong*. The *ital* is distributed to members giving the children first, women, youths and then elders. All but members of the administration (also known as the *Nyahbinghi Theocracy*) remain for the next session (*Ibid*).

### 6.1.3 *Governmental*

After *reasoning,* the *governmental* proceedings are officially opened by singing one chant. This is followed by the reading of the agenda and minutes of the previous meeting. The agenda for every meeting is the same because every discussion is the follow-up of what was previously discussed and agreed upon. The *elect of records*, after declaring the meeting opened, will read the agenda that includes minutes of the previous meeting, announcements, reports, apologies and matters arising.[79] Issues like the building of the tabernacle and land remain on the agenda for as long as they are under construction or in the process of acquisition (*Ibid*). Announcements and reports are about Rastafari events that took place or invitations to events that members feel are relevant to the Movement. Sometimes

[79] There is no one day that passes without new members or visitors from other provinces or houses coming. The number of members however does not increase because not all members of the *house* always attend.

*governmental* may not take place because the first session may take too long or because there may be other pressing issues to discuss or problems to solve. For example, if there is to be a regional gathering, the *governmental* session may be replaced by preparing for the night.

An example of problems that arose in the house was one that involved two youths, Nhlakanipho and Desmond, both 12 years old then. They were reported by their parents to Danny — a member of a disciplinary committee. This procedure can be traced back to the apartheid era Civic Association Movements and people's courts. Civic associations and people's courts were social movements that were established in the township for the purpose of mobilising and disciplining residents. The Civic Association Movement was central to the insurrectionary liberation struggle carried out within South Africa and mobilised township residents to demand political reform and the rectification of misdeeds perpetrated by the white administration (Lanegran, 1995:101). According to Danny:

> their parents complained that they were rude boys, smoking *ganja* and stealing money to buy some. They were also reported to be no longer attending school and showing no respect to their parents. Their parents are blaming it on *I n I* because the youths claim to be members of the house (*Observation, 27 December 2003*).[80]

Because the youth were present, they were questioned, their addresses taken as well as the names of schools and classes. It was resolved that one of the priests would visit their parents and school in an attempt to solve the problem. It was the first time the *house* had come across this kind of problem. The need to have one policy governing the youths, particularly those attending without their parents or their permission was discussed. It was decided that the issue be put on the agenda for *reasoning* the next *strong* (*Observation, 10 March 2002*).

[80] This was not in line with Rastafarianism that discouraged the unregulated smoking or recreational smoking of ganja and non-attendance at school and highlights the importance of education and discipline.

The number attending the Saturday gathering is not so large; it ranges between 20 and 35 members. There are various explanations for this fluctuation. One of the reasons is the belief that members do not recruit people. *Jah Youth* observes: "Rasta does not convert people that *who feels it knows it,* which implies that people should join the Movement out of their own will." (*Observation, 06 April 2002*). In addition, the majority of them are self-employed and it is during Saturdays that they work. Lack of space (because the tabernacle cannot be used during windy and rainy days) and chairs to sit on is another reason for the low attendence.

## 6.2 The Dance and Dance Halls

This is perhaps the most important of the gatherings or events attended by Rastafarians after *grounation*. Its importance lies in its ability to attract Rastafarians from all three orders, non-affiliated Rastafarians, reggae and *ganja* lovers, and interested onlookers. Its other significance is that it is the way that society encounters Rastafarians. The dance is the only event in Rustafarian lives that brings them together once a week in great numbers. Organising dances is the responsibility of the *Moden House,* and they compile a timetable showing who is to host the dance and when. Thus should any Rastafarian wish to host a dance, he must book his date with the *house*. The *house* sees to the provision of a music system and the DJ for the dance. The host to be will then pay R150. The dance takes place every Sunday starting in the afternoon depending on the weather. If it is a very hot day, it will be delayed until late afternoon. The dance takes place in the street in front of the house of the host (*Interview, Humbleness, 23rd September 2003*).



**Photograph 3:** Rastafarian reciting a poem in a dance. Note some itals (fruits) on sale. *(Photograph- Midas H Chawane, Mokoka Library, Daveyton,* 16 February 2002.)



**Photograph 4:** Youth dance. Note the step they are following. (*Photographed - Midas Harold Chawane, Mokoka Library, Daveyton,* 16th February 2002.)

The official opening is made in a similar manner followed when opening all other gatherings; however, in this case, it is done early (about 12h00) before the arrival

of many people. People from different walks of life are attracted, including members from other congregations and Apostolic Churches as they pass by from their respective churches, drunkards, children and many more join the dance (*Observation, 16 February 2002*).

Elders, youth and women do their own separate dances because their styles differ. The pace amongst women dancers is slow and elders do the Nyabhinghi dance. The youth dance is the most attractive and onlookers tend to concentrate more on them than on the elders and women. This is because they dance following particular steps. Before they start dancing to a song, it is first played for a moment until someone sets the steps that will be followed. All dancers dance following one-step until the end of the song. The steps that are followed are easy and after observing their movement, anyone can join in. The dance also gives a chance to non-Rastafarians to smoke *ganja* in public. Police and soldiers always pass by without harassing them or sometimes avoid passing through. When asked why police are not giving them a hard time Rastafarians answered by saying it is maybe because of their number. Sometimes there can be so many people that the street is closed for traffic (*Ibid*).

From their activities and actions during the dance, it can be said that Rastafarians are in some ways a closed society. Every Rastafarian coming to the dance has to go around and greet all others one-by-one or group-by- group. In the case of one-by-one greeting, they greet by knocking their fists together while where there is a group they all knock their fists together at the same time. This is done with every Rastafarian no matter how many of them one has to greet, but only Rastafarians are greeted. The same procedure applies when one leaves the dance for home. In the sharing of *ganja* and *itals* only those people known and those who seem to be true Rastafarians are catered for (*Ibid*). They will always share *ganja* and *itals* with each other and ignore those who are not Rastafarians. Rastafarian women always share *ganja* with each other away from the company of men. The reason for this is that some people and others who claim to be Rastafarians mix their *ganja* with *Babylon sticks* (cigarettes) and do not always *nyam ital* (healthy) food. *Ganja* plays a

vital role during the dance and is readily available. The *ganja bread* is sold for one rand for a small piece and is the most popular *ital* baked without any sugar, salt or any ingredients apart from *ganja*. Some *ganja* is sold during the dance. There are also other items on sale such as Rastafarian T-shirts, caps, beads, badges and portraits and *itals* such as *inuts* (peanuts)*, inanas* (bananas) and oranges (*Ibid*).



**Photograph 5:** Rastafarian women sharing *ganja.* (*Photograph - Midas H Chawane* 08 March 2002).

Dance halls take place on Fridays, the main aim of organising them being to raise funds. They take place in halls from six o'clock at night to six o'clock the next morning, and are usually organised by the houses or committees. Entrance to the dance hall is R10 per person, and attracts Rastafarians from the entire East Rand region. Apart from the above features, dance halls are similar to the main dance (*Observation, 08 March 2002*).




**Photograph 6:** Rastafarian men sharing *ganja.* (*Photograph - Midas H Chawane, Mokoka Library, Daveyton*, 16 February 2002).

Dances also constitute an important occasion where announcements and speeches affecting Rastafarians of Daveyton are made. Poems recited during the dance are protest ones.[81] Women are not involved in organising or hosting the dance. Their role is limited to preparing *itals* to sell and taking part in the dance. For the greater part of the gathering, the women keep to themselves *(Observation, 16 February 2002).*

## 6.3 Regional, Provincial and National Gathering

The importance of these types of gatherings is that they serve as the only channels through which Rastafarians can express themselves as a group. Regional gatherings usually take place every second week of the month. All houses of the East Rand hold them. Each house is given an annual chance to host the gathering. The *House of Fire* in Daveyton hosted the gathering for the year 2002 and during 2003, they were held in Wattville.

[81] See Appendix for poems that are recited during gatherings.

According to the agenda, the main purpose for gathering is to discuss matters affecting Rastafarians on the East Rand region. This demonstrates the acceptance of municipal demarcation. These matters consist of topics such as registration of houses and members, sanctification, celebrations of important dates in their calendar and communicating information from the provincial and national houses (*Ibid*). As host for the year 2002, the *House of Fire* had to make all the necessary arrangements. The organising committee had to see to the hiring of a tent, tables and chairs. The catering committee sees to the buying and preparation of *itals,* and the cooking is done during the night on an open fire. The welcoming committee takes care of everyone's arrival. Other *houses* that come to the gathering made a contribution of about R150.00 towards the preparations, which is used to buy *ganja* and *itals* that is cooked for members free of charge (*Ibid*).

The gathering starts on Saturday evening and ends on Sunday morning and takes the form of an extended version of the process of *grounation,* with the exclusion of the *reasoning* session. Thus, it is more *governmental* in nature. It starts with a meeting of priests from the various *houses* where an agenda for the night is drafted. Once the agenda is completed (between 10 and 11pm), the gathering is officially opened (*Ibid*).



**Photograph 7:** Proceedings during a regional gathering. Seated are all the priests from the East Rand region (*Photograph - Midas H Chawane, Maphupheni,* 08 March 2002).

Regional and provincial gatherings are usually held in preparation for a national gathering. Announcements from the National Council and other houses are made during these gatherings. For example, an announcement may be about the opening of a new house that will require the presence of whoever can attend. There is sometimes an overlap between regional and provincial gatherings when instead of attending a provincial gathering, it is decided that members from outside the East Rand region can also attend a regional gathering. For instance, the regional gathering of the 7th February 2004 was attended by Rastafarians from Soweto, Alexander and Yeoville with two Rastafarians form Cape Town. Everyone is free to contribute irrespective of the province from which he comes. This gathering, though taking place at the regional level was in preparation for the National gathering (*Observation, 07 February 2004*).

The National gathering takes places twice a year under the auspices of the RNC; it is attended by representatives of houses from all provinces of South Africa. Its purpose is to review progress and discuss issues affecting all Rastafarians at the national level, such as membership and registration. It is during the meeting of the National Executive that general policies and demands of Rastafarians from the government are formulated.



**Photograph 8:** Members of the catering committee preparing *ital* during the regional gathering. (*Photograph - Midas H Chawane, Maphupheni,* 08 March 2002).



**Photograph 9:** Members of the catering committee cooking *ital.* Note that the actual cooking of food is done by men (*Photograph - Midas H Chawane, Maphupheni*, 08 March 2002).

## 6. 4 Family Gatherings and Visits

These types of gatherings highlight the importance of the family amongst Rastafarians. When and where a family gathering is to be held is announced during *governmental.* Sunday is the day set aside by Rastafarians to look after their families and visit other Rastafarian families. Family gathering takes place amongst members of the *House of Fire* and only those who are married take part. Its main purpose is to get their families acquainted and to encourage each other, especially encouraging their wives to adopt the Rastafarian way of life since Rastafarians maintain that '*dawters* or *omen* take a little longer to know and *overstand* the *works* of *Jah*' (*Interviews, Kebra 14 May 2003*). The gathering is not a formal one. Women and children spend their time on their own and men do likewise. During the gathering families share *ital, ganja* and discuss issues such as:

> How we eat at home; whether husband and wife eat together in one dish or not and if not why; how children should be raised, in short, we discuss everything that has to do with the family (*Ibid*).

What is interesting is that the problem why some families do not eat together is because the wife may still be eating what Rastafarians should not eat and as such, she has to eat from a separate dish. The gathering is

thus meant to convince women to be true Rastafarians and because it is informal, it gives them a chance to talk in order to get used to talking and be able to *reason* at a higher level during the *grounation (Ibid).* The importance of family gatherings lies in the fact that it indicates concern for maintaining the stability and cohesion of the family, and reflects understanding of the family as keeper of moral standards – something that they missed as children (*see Table 4.1 or Appendix*).

According to *Sister Queen Fire* women's discussions:

> Deal with what a Rastafarian woman can or cannot do. Women are for example expected to cover their heads especially when in the company of men and should wear long skirts (below their kneecaps). There are also some laws governing family life amongst Rastafarians. Women should abstain from mixing with men during their menstrual periods (known as the *process of cleansing*) which implies that they should not come to the *house.* Women are also not supposed to cook in the house during this time (*Interview, Sister Queen Fire, 27h February 2002*).

The above is very similar to prescriptions found in many other religious organisations. Apart from these official gatherings, there are also celebrations to mark important occasions. Celebrating these can take many forms, such as a dance or a night vigil. In the *House of Fire,* commemorations always take place beforehand because their gatherings take place on Saturdays as most of the time the date (for meeting) is during the week. Annual commemorations amongst Rastafarians are significantly on the three most important dates of their calendar: April 21st (the arrival date of His Majesty's three-day visit to Jamaica in 1966), July 23rd His *Earthday* (Birthday) in 1892, and November 2nd (His coronation of 1930). Other important celebration dates are January 7th (Ethiopian Christmas), May 25th (African Liberation Day), August 17th (Marcus Garvey *Earthday*), September 11th (Ethiopian New Year) (*Interview, Bingy Bunny, 05 January 2003: Jahug, 1992:10).* These celebrations can sometimes coincide with other gatherings or organised to coincide with them, for example, they can be organised to take place on the same day as a regional gathering. However, these events are not fully commemorated by Rastafarians of Daveyton. The Ethiopian Christmas, African Liberation Day, and the Ethiopian New Year, for example, are not celebrated.

Another important event celebrated by Rastafarians during *reasoning,* is the Black History Month during the entire month of February (*see above*), which is celebrated at local and provincial levels. Provincially, Rastafarians from the local house attend conferences (usually in Johannesburg). Locally, speakers who are well versed in African history are invited to come to Daveyton to speak about black people's history. In 2003, Dr. Lavin Mgwebi Snail was invited to speak (*Observation, 12 February 2002*). Students and teachers are also invited to attend and a community hall or sometimes a school is used. According to Rastafarians, February has become their month and organising celebrations such as this is one way of reminding society of their existence and serves as another way of keeping contact with the community, when Rastafarians play drums, sing songs and recite poems to entertain the audience (*Interview, Jah Power 07 January 2003*).

Taking into account the meanings of the concept of culture as defined by Malonowiski, Stuart Hall and van der Walt, it is argueable that Rastafarianism constitutes a cultural movement, since it includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, ideas, social relations, language, and social organisation. Rastafarians, as members of a cultural movement, have developed their own ideas (knowledge) embodied in their own institutions (Rastafarianism) that is formed and reformed during *reasoning.* They also have their own belief system based on the veneration of Selassie a god. Their art is expressed in performances such as dances, poetry, singing and drumming. Rastafarians have also developed their own social rituals, such as family visits and the maintenance of gender relations; laws governing what Rastafarians can and cannot do and those that govern the *ground*; and their own language in the form of *iri-talk.*

## 6.5 Rastafarian Concept of Salvation: Consideration of Millenarianism

Rastafarianism as a form of religion differs not only from the mainstreams of Judeo-Christianity and Islam but also from traditional African religion or Independent African Christian religion. In spite of certain identifiable common

characteristics, such as the widespread belief in a Supreme Being, the Rastafarian notion of *Jah* differs in certain respects from many African traditional religions. Although not universal, the veneration of ancestors is widespread amongst

African traditional religions, a practice that Rastafarians on the whole tend to repudiate. In terms of salvation, emphasis amongst African traditional religions is on the attainment of immediate goals, both social and personal. While Rastafarians, like African traditional religions, believe in reincarnation, they reject the notion of an after-life. Expressing an opinion about the coming of Christ, Jah Power (quoting Mutabaruka during his South African tour) said:

> His father sat on the rocking chair and waited for Jesus to come and never come. His mother sat on the rocking chair in the veranda waiting for Jesus to come and never did. And now he is doing the same, waiting for the same Jesus (Observation, 12 February 2003).

When repatriation was the main form of salvation envisaged by Rastafarianism during its early years in Jamaica, one can agree with Johnson-Hill (1996) that the Movement appeared to assume the character of a messianic cult with millennial expectations of returning to a pristine golden age (physical repatriation to Africa). However, in the intervening years Rastafarians developed into a more complex, distinctive religious form, which defied traditional social scientific categorisations ( *Ibid,* 1996: 10) and started to reject a literal apocalypse or second coming.

It is difficult to generalise. There are broad similarities between Rastafarianism and Millenarian movements. Taking into consideration the division of Rastafarianism in Daveyton into three sub-groups and the existence of Rastafarians who are not affiliated make it difficult to generalise on its nature. Although members of all three sects are perceived as Rastafarians and see themselves as such, their religious convictions are different, making it even more difficult to categorise Rastafarianism. The discussion that follows explores the millennial aspects of Rastafarianism in more detail.

In order to understand the similarities between Rastafarianism and other Millenarian movements, it is important to describe the concept of millennium. It is a Latin word for 1000, and derived from the Book of Revelation. In Revelation 20, Satan is described as being bound and thrown into a bottomless pit after which Christian martyrs reigned for 1000 years (Cohn, 1957: 13). Taking into account the historical accounts of how millenarian movements emerge (*see* Chapter Two), the Rastafarian Movement can be seen to be millennial in terms of reasons for its origin — often material shortcomings denoting lack of social justice. Lack of housing, inadequate provision of services, and failing attempts by local authorities to improve the situation have all added to their frustrations. Added to these was the dashed expectation that the new democratic dispensation would bring much needed change. All these added to the desire for a replacement of the existing order with a new one. Rastafarianism was thus born from the same kinds of reasons that have fuelled millenarian movements elsewhere, and resemble them in its desire to overthrow the corrupt (unjust) order. In the Bulhoek case documented by Edgar (1988), everyday life was disrupted in the sense that the Israelites stayed away from home following Mgijima's vision, but Mgijima's millenarian beliefs were integrated into daily life. In Rastafarianism religion and practices are also integrated into everyday life.

Although economic, social and political conditions played a role in Rastafarians' decision to join the Movement, factors such as reggae music, *ganja* smoking, and the dance prove more influential. Unlike other millenarian movements, Rastafarians see themselves as part of society and work towards its wellbeing instead of operating as a secluded movement. They take part in community work, and perform celebrations through dancing, singing and reciting poems. Salvation, therefore, is not something that has to be waited for but must be worked towards. Their message to society is not about the end of the world but about living in the present world peacefully. This differentiates Rastafarianism from other millenarian movements, although it is similarly based on rigid and homogeneous perceptions. Rastafarianism has become so open a proposition that it is interpreted differently by individuals as well as by the different *orders.*

Unlike other millenarian movements where salvation is not anticipated on earth, salvation for Rastafarians is to be attained on earth because it is here on earth where sinners pay for sins. For them, heaven does not exist in its physical form but as a state of mind (*Observation, 29th June 2002*). The fact that they do not believe in literal violence to crush Babylon suggest that this is to be accomplished in a miraculous way. In this case, they believe that Babylon can be destroyed by *chanting it down* with drumbeats and by natural forces such as fire and brimstone. When *repatriation* is attained, life on earth will be transformed and there will be no more wars, oppression, corruption and evil associated with Babylon (*Ibid*).

The characteristics of millenarian movements that have been analysed by scholars tend to suggest that millenarianism attracts the deprived. These people, due to their economic, social and ethical deprivation gravitate towards one another with a hope of improving their present situation. Applying the deprivation theory to the Rastafarian phenomenon, Clarke argues that Rastafarians are not primarily seeking compensation for the relative economic and social deprivation they experience in *Babylon* because they shun her economic and social status (Clarke, 1994: 71-74). Their salvation is fundamentally a search for a relevant way of interpreting the past and the present in the light of future events. They are very much concerned with developing a black understanding and interpretation of a search of life and not simply with a method that will enable members to cope. The Movement was born out of a search for a lost cultural identity and awareness, a sense of dignity, self-respect, and an appropriate and coherent system of values (*Ibid*). The research undertaken here seems to confirm this.

Thus, we see that Rastafarianism differs from millenarian movements in several significant respects. Firstly, it is a leaderless movement. Most millenarian movements tend to centre on the leadership of a charismatic person who alone claims to be in liaison with the supernatural being. During gatherings, each person is free to express oneself and there is no one particular person responsible for overseeing proceedings. Johnson-Hill (1996) summarises the situation thus:

> [Unlike] the adherents of most classical millenarian movements, Rastafarians disavowed allegiance to a single charismatic leader. The majority of them do not even affiliate with a centralised organisation. They are not linked to specific sanctuaries or faith centres, and do not espouse any set creed. Nor are they institutionalised in such a way that they train religious specialists who then transmit doctrines or teaching to non-specialists (*Ibid:* 4).

In this respect, their beliefs are not highly systematised or logically interconnected and that they are open to a number of possible interpretations. This might well be a source of strength rather than an indication of their inherent fragility (Clarke, 1994:78). Secondly, unlike in other religious movements, members of the congregation are encouraged to ask and answer questions during *reasoning*. Thirdly, their aims and practices suggest that they are more than a religious or social movement. Although, they are also concerned with political and economic injustices, and sing for a betterment world, their movement, may be seen as a way of life, which is more than just a millenarian movement. Johnson-Hill (1996) prefers to view Rastafarianism as a revolutionary force and as a popular front born out of the Jamaican cultural and religious experiences that are understood as a transformative consciousness that contains elements of a new social ethics (*Ibid*). This is because life for them has come to include not only the spiritual but also other aspects. As for Babylon, they are aware of her strength and the futility of physically fighting against her. Instead of choosing the self-destructive route of fighting a physical battle, they identify within the system things that they perceive as bad, and so influence each other not to do them.

## 6.6 Conclusion

Rastafarians in Daveyton have devised their own ways of meeting one another for spiritual, social and organisational reasons. Gatherings, especially *grounation,* regional, provincial, national and family ones are a very important part of Rastafarians of the *House of Fire*. Dances and dancehall gatherings are very important for *Moden House*. Without these gatherings, it would be impossible to communicate and share information that is important in forming and maintaining a group identity. It is difficult to generalise about the nature of the Movement by looking at how they gather and what they do during these gatherings, but some

observations were possible. The *churchical* session during *grounation* addresses the spiritual aspect. *Reasoning* includes, among others, spiritual, political, social, economic and educational matters.

While Rastafarians sing for the destruction of Babylon and repatriation as their ultimate goals, they are aware that this is not an easy task to attain. That is why when *reasoning* they seldom talk about salvation or the end of the world in its present form as envisaged by other millenarian movements. In their fight against *Babylon*, they acknowledge her strength and the difficulty of overcoming her (by encouraging each other to be strong). An interesting aspect of their belief expressed during gatherings is non-violence. When looking at how they think Babylon will be overcome without the use of violence, their expectation of divine intervention appears to resemble a millenarian movement.

Even though it has become clear during *reasoning* that Rastafarians oppose the existing order, they prefer to operate within it in their own way instead of working against it. The fact that their ground is not situated on the outskirts of town shows that they see themselves as members of society. In order to be visible, they have come to develop special characteristics that are unique to the Movement. The next chapter looks at how these salient features developed and what their meaning is.

# CHAPTER SEVEN

## Identity Formation among the Rastafarians of Daveyton

We have seen in the previous chapter that, according to informants and the way they tell their story, political movements overshadowed Rastafarianism before the dawn of democracy. Most people who were Rastafarians or who later joined the Movement were preoccupied with the struggle for liberation, as in the case of Ras Bongane and Jah Power.[82] These were politically active before they decided to become Rastafarians (*See Appendix A*). This situation was to change after political liberation in 1994. The new democratic constitution promised freedom for all including Rastafarians. This chapter attempts to understand how the changing political scene influenced Rastafarians' process of identity formation. Taking into account the negative attitude of most members of civil society towards Rastafarians and the unwillingness of the government to recognise the Movement, their identity developed not only out of the desire to be different, but also as a reaction to the *system* and a society that was not willing to recognise them. In order to express their separateness and challenge the existing social, cultural, religious, political and economic orders, they have adopted a number of symbols. The extent to which these are a challenge to the *status quo;* how society reacts; and how society is affected by symbolic challenges posed by Rastafarianism are some of the questions that will be answered here.

Most of the data in this chapter was obtained from primary materials, such as newspapers and interviews with individual Rastafarians. Thus primary and secondary materials, debates and discussions during *reasoning* and observation of activities during ritual ceremonies provided valuable information in this chapter.

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[82] Ras Bongane met a Rastafarian during a political demonstration while Jah Pwer was a member of the Pan African Congress before he became a Rastafarian.

The symbols that proclaim the cultural identity that Rastafarians have developed helps them to preserve a sense of uniqueness as a social group, protect their beliefs, and validate the Movement's claims, thus:

> Through the way they dress, their dreadlocks, their headgear in the Ethiopian colours, their music and general lifestyle, and their way of living naturally, the Rastafarians assert their right to define themselves, to decide who they were, and who they are, and to determine how they should live and the values they should pursue (*Clarke,* 1994:57).

The most salient of these is their adoption and wearing of the colours of Marcus Garvey (*Ithiopian* colours): red, gold and green; and their dreadlocks, which symbolise the boundaries of group membership and at the same time, reflect their defiance of *Babylon* (Kebede and Knottnerus, 2006: 9). The important thing about Clarke's quotation is the way he posits the idea of a fluid identity that strives for definition and is open to the notion of self-exploration. What is most fascinating about Rastafarians is the holistic, different lifestyle called *I-tal leivity* which includes dress and rituals among others. They also separate themselves from society through the use of language they call *iri talk*, *Iyaric, dread talk*, or *soul language,* which is not only a boundary marker but also serves as a medium of communication which reflects the ethos of the movement (*Ibid*). In their quest to be different, Rastafarians of Daveyton, like all other Rastafarians, have adopted the smoking and use of *ganja.* Even more interesting is they have developed their own ways of celebrating their rituals such as burials, sanctifications of newborn babies, marriages and *earthdays* (birthdays). Before a full description of these various forms of symbolism is attempted, it is important to discuss the historical origins of Rastafarian cultural identity.

## 7.1 The emergence of Rastafarian cultural identity

Rastafarian cultural identity arises within what social scientists have described as the cultural sphere of American plantations where slavery resulted in the creation of a very complex cultural arena. Slaves were taken from various parts of Africa and found themselves without any common cultural identity. Attempts by the British authorities to make British subjects out of slaves were thwarted by the

Maroons, who established autonomous communities and organised themselves along African tribal patterns (*Ibid:* 5). Maroons were found in most slave societies such as Jamaica, Haiti Brazil, and South Africa where they were active in organising resitance against slavery. When the British took over Jamaica in the middle of the seventeenth century, most slaves escaped to the mountains where the other fugitives frequently joined them. They continuously harassed the planters by stealing, trading with slaves, and insing them to run away. Haiti had its own Maroons as early as 1620 who were responsible for the uprisings of 1679, 1691 and 1704 (*Franklin and Moss*: 45). In Brazil, Maroons established an African state called the Republic of Palmers (*Ibid: 51).* In South Africa, they organised a maroon community at Cape Hangklip and a chain of slave contacts linking it with Cape Town (Elphick and Giliomee: 160).

Blacks, according to Rastafarians, were not only physically uprooted from their original homeland but were also alienated from their true identity, hence their culture became a blend of African and Caribbean cultures. They took from both cultures what they felt was relevant to their course, and together with slave, culture forged a new cultural identity (*Ibid:* 10). Rastafarian identity is thus understood as evolving out of cultural resistance — the lack of political freedom and opposition to an imposed slave identity. Mason (2003) describes the lack of identity or slave identity as having emanated from the belief by slavers that slave:

> Owe their lives to the masters. On their own, they belonged to no legitimate social order. They had been stripped of all rights and all claims of birth and family and were connected to society only through their masters. Rightless, kinless, and utterly marginalised, they were the most degraded members of slave-owning society (*Mason,* 2003: 7).

Mason goes on to say that, this was social death as opposed to physical death. However, slaves did not see their condition as permanent, which is why they refused to accept it. Similarly, the cultural identity of Africans in Africa emerged out of opposition to colonial culture. In order for colonialism to be successful, it was important to destroy or distort traditional African identities. In South Africa, the social and historical context in which Rastafarian cultural identity arose was also characterised by the lack of democratic institutions that provided space for

individuals or groups to express their own beliefs. Rastafarian identity in South Africa developed in reaction to the predominantly apartheid culture which put a higher value on European culture than on African culture, but denied Africans access to it. In the absence of one common identity that could be shared by all youths across ethnic and linguistic lines, which was reinforced by apartheid, Rastafarianism offered an option for cultural unity. Before 1994, Rastafarian identity in Daveyton arose in reaction to the cultural sphere that was shaped by the apartheid system, which sought to polarise blacks along ethnic lines. Rastafarianism as a result became a magnet that pulled people together (especially the young) from different cultural backgrounds. The Movement came to serve as a platform on which the youth could mould a new cultural identity based on an African perspective. This new common identity cut across cultural, linguistic, ethnic and tribal lines.

The period after 1994 saw the reassertion and a more open expression of Rastafarian cultural identity. This was the result of two processes. Firstly, as indicated in this study, when apartheid was abolished, Rastafarians seized the opportunity and started to make themselves more visible in the hope that society would be more tolerant and that the government would recognise them. The more Rastafarians realised that the government was not willing to recognise their Movement, the more the will to express their separate identity grew, sometimes resulting in violent clashes with the police, for instance in 1995 when Rastafarians in Cape Town clashed with the police during a demonstration for the legalisation of *ganja (Pace Magazine, July 1995).*

In spite of the fact that there appears to be opposition arising from the government and some members of society, Rastafarian cultural identity is becoming more popular, especially among the youth who are still in search of their identity. We may note that some members of society who are not Rastafarians have adopted Rastafarian symbols. These popular symbols include dreadlocks, specific attire, *ganja* smoking, language and music. Whilst the wearing of dreadlocks and the use of Rastafarian colours have been

commercialised, the smoking of *ganja,* language and music have all become popular amongst the youth. It suggests that the commoditisation of some of the symbols of Rastafarian cultural identity has made them more of a style than a serious cultural phenomenon. However, these more sensational aspects of style are not the essential traits of Rastafarianism. While other expressions, such as dreadlocks or the smoking of *ganja* are not compulsory for Rastafarians, it is compulsory and important for all those who claim to be true Rastafarians to live a particular way of life called *I-tal livity.*

## 7.2 *I-tal livity*: Rastafarian lifestyle

The practice of *I-tal livity* (vital living) amongst Rastafarians is reflected in their appearance, diet, use of herbs, process of reflection, modes of production, and aesthetic activity (Kebede and Knottnerus, 1998:494). Rastafarians expect each other to live in accordance with nature's laws, or living naturally, which means living in that climate and culture for which one is suited. According to Kebede and Knottnerus, the concept *I-tal livity* occupies a central place in the worldview of Rastafarians. It represents an alternative to the lifestyle followed by most members of society and involves the philosophy of living harmoniously as well as collectively with nature. It is a communal mode of life that abhors individualism and unnecessary interference with the rhythm of life (*Ibid*). This means living in a society where nature is respected, and where one lives close to the earth. In practice, living naturally means living on or off the land. It means producing one's own food naturally, eating only natural (*I-tal)* food, and respecting the land's sacred character by refusing to use it as a commercial commodity to be sold for profit (Clarke, 1994: 83). Thus, *I-tal livity* denotes how Rastafarians should live and behave, do or not do, and eat or not eat and so forth as a way of life.

Within *Grounation I-tal livity* requires clean hands and pure hearts, and entails the sipping of *I-tal sup* (soup) and the licking of *ital cup,* and the chanting, stepping and

jumping to the Nyahbinghi drums (*Jahug*, 1992: 10). The *Jahug* summarises *I-tal livity* as follows:

> that both the Nyahbinghi men and women are expected to abide by the laws of His Imperial Majesty. Nyahbinghi man should abide by one *Queen* (i.e. he must be married to only one woman). He must be non-violent, non-abusive, non-political and non-partisan; he must be free from all criminal activities; intimate relationship with whites is strictly forbidden; he should not abide with women who are non- Rastafari; he must maintain and raise his children in the order of righteousness and not allow his children to comb or trim their hair (*Ibid: 42*).

*I-tal livity* thus governs almost every aspect of a Rastafarians' life, sets up monogamy, a code of 'rightiousness' and is professedly apolitical. Contrary to the traditional African practice of polygamy, Rastafarians should be married to only one *Queen* (wife) and she should be black and a Rastafarian. They should not get involved in violent activities: fighting physically or verbally. They expect each other to live a humble lifestyle free from political affiliation.

*I-tal livity* for men does not mean the same as for women. For example, unlike her male counterpart, a Nyahbinghi woman is not allowed to play the drums but can only play the *shaka* (shaker) or *timbrel*. As already seen, a Nyahbinghi woman is not permitted to 'administrate' around the altar or to prophesy before the congregation. She can only make suggestions during *reasoning* and participate during *governmental*.[83] If she gives birth to a *Prince* (boy), she should stay away from the *issemble* for three months and for a *Princess* (girl), for four months.

[83] This shows how Rastafarians use African culture selectively to form their identity. An example of such aspect is where women are not allowed to stand in front of men and address them unless in a specific situation.



**Photograph 10:** These Rastafarian women are wearing skirts that cover their knees and they all cover their heads. (*Photograph - Midas H Chawane, Mokoka Library, Daveyton*, 16 February 2002).

*I-tal livity* allows the wearing of jewellery but forbids the piercing of body parts. The plaiting of dreadlocks is also forbidden as it is written in the Bible in Peter 3:3 (*Ibid: 43*). It (*I-tal livity*) also prohibits one from attending the congregation to activate his or her evil conceptions, which may include:

> carnal mind, backbiting with the tongue, lying lips, slanderous speaking with delusive thought, stealing, use of lethal weapons, sticks and stones, or fighting physically. No discordance in spirit or physically, here or anywhere. No unfairness. The *ivine* principles or rules must not be kept in *Ivine issemble* alone (*Ibid: 52*).

What Rastafarians should eat and not eat forms one of the most important topics of discussion during *reasoning* in almost every *gathering.* No one Rastafarian seems sure about the answers to this question. The Bible is used to throw light on this topic but is critically discussed and contradictions within it are highlighted. Deuteronomy 14:21 and Leviticus 17:13 and 14, for example, are interpreted during reasoning as talking about what the Israelites should or should not eat and what they should do with the type of food they should not eat. One of the contradictions in these books is that the former states that what Israelites do not

eat and should not eat must be given to their neighbours or strangers; while the latter says, it should be thrown away *(Observation, 2nd February 2002).*

In the list of what constitutes *I-tal* food, *flash* (meat), *Babylon water* (alcohol), *Babylon sticks* (cigarettes), salt, sugar, processed food, all food prepared by non-Rastafarians and food from unknown sources are excluded. The reason they do not eat these types of food (junk) is that a human body is taken to be holy and should not be contaminated. The reason salt is not used is that it is used in the process of cleansing to chase away evil spirits (*Ibid).*

During the reasoning session on 2 February 2002 a question was put to the *house* about whether they should eat milk and eggs. The reply was that milk is meant for calves and that milking a cow is theft since it denies calves of their milk. This argument was taken further by saying that calves as well as babies suck from their mothers until a certain age and that for men to eat milk for their entire lives is unreasonable and unfair (*Interview, Kebra, 14thMay 2003*). *Ital food,* sometimes shortened to *ital,* according to them is natural food that grows from the soil. Thus, the most important diet is fruits and vegetables; it excludes any animal product. As to why Rastafarians do not eat meat, Jah Power said that they should not kill for the following reasons:

> *Jah* made man to be the guardian of the earth and all animals on it but this is not the case because humankind is trying to *nyam* all animals out of *iration.* In the beginning, man and animals used to stay together without problems. Man started to *nyam* meat and kill animals for it and when animals became aware of this they started to fear man and went to stay far away from him (*Interview, Jah Power, 07 January 2003).*

During the same *reasoning* session*,* a concern was raised, if Rastafarians do not eat meat it will affect their health and the growth of their children. This was refuted, with the claim that the opposite is true. Citing as an example, it was argued that of all animals the elephant is the biggest; it does not eat meat (*Ibid*). Food is usually cooked during regional gatherings and funerals. The catering committee buys and prepares *ital*. The most common food cooked is rice and vegetables in two separate big pots. Apart from water, no salt is added. Rastafarians of the

*House of Fire* claim all this is what separates a true Rastafarian from the rest. As Jah Power put it, "Some people do Rastafari and some like us live Rastafari that is Jah Livity" (*Ibid*). Hence, Rastafarian consciousness and identity that is unique from the rest of the society.

## 7.3 The Colours of Marcus Garvey and Other Symbolism

A further most important aspect used to differentiate Rastafarians from the rest of society is their adoption and wearing of the colours Marcus Garvey used for the UNIA flag. These are black, green and red. With permission from Garvey, they added the colour yellow or gold. According to Garvey, black symbolises the skin colour of the black man, green for nature, red for the blood of blacks that has flowed in oppression, and yellow, which, according to Rastafarians, stands for wealth. These colours are found on their clothes, on amulets around their neck, and on their musical instruments (Oosthuizen, 1990: 46-47).

Different people interpret these colours differently, for example, for some the colour red stands for the church triumph, that is, the church of Rastafarians. It also symbolises the blood that martyrs have shed. Yellow represents the wealth of the homeland (Africa). Green represents the beauty and vegetation of *Ithiopia,* the Promised Land. Sometimes black is used to represent the colour of Africans, from whom 98% of the Jamaicans are descended.[84] These colours recur on just about all Rastafarian accessories — hats, head wraps, scarves, wristbands, banners, earrings, beadwork, drums and other musical instruments.

Sometimes the colours are reversed for commercial reproduction but originally red should always appear at the bottom when combined with the other two (that is they should appear as green, yellow and red). Red stands for the Coercive Genocidal Servitude (slavery). Gold stands for the wealth that was stolen and the resources of life that continues to be taken out of Africa. Green stands for the abundance of nature on the African continent. A variation on this theme is green,

[84] Rastafarian Religion in http://www.aspects.net/~nick/religion.htm, p. 2.

black and red with a lion's head or map of Africa in the centre. The lion is a traditional symbol of Ethiopia and is often used to represent Haile Selassie who is also known as the 'Lion of Judah'. The lion is sometimes depicted with a human face sporting dreadlocks and a beard in the manner of Haile Selassie himself (Gondwe, 2002: 14).

While Rastafarianism is primarily presented as an internal journey, certain external symbols and rituals have been formalised and certain visual codes established which identify it. Every symbol has a spiritual significance and always bears the central theme of Africa. A recurring theme is the literal presentation of the actual shape of the continent, Africa. This appears regularly in their artwork, from pedants and T-shirts to banners, posters and books. It is even depicted in non-verbal communication in the presentation of linked hands with thumbs pressed together to form the shape of Africa and the fist salute, an ancient call of power to the people. Rastafarians can also be identified by their attire, which bears the three colours. These are mostly worn on Saturdays during congregation, *binghi* or on special occasions if members are not wearing their white gowns. Special attire is not always necessary for Rastafarians attending these gatherings. Some wear their ordinary attire sometimes with a green, yellow and red scarf or badges of Haile Selassie, Marcus Garvey, Africa, a lion, Bob Marley or any reggae star.

Rastafarian colours are the most obvious colours for commercialisation. Non-Rastafarians buy and wear Rastafarian outfits such as T-shirts, hats, beads and necklaces. The Rastafarian colour combination features in fashion items that appeal across cultures, especially with the hip-hop generation (Gondwe, 2002: 14). The colours of Garvey have also come to be worn by people who wear African traditional attire. These people often wear Rastafarian beads or necklaces with their traditional African attire. Women sometimes wear Rastafarian turbans on their heads to complement their African attire. Ordinary people in the street also buy and wear Rastafarian hats, caps and T-shirts.

## 7.4 *Iry Talk* and Reggae Music

There are many style aspects that Rastafarians of Daveyton appropriated from Jamaica and commodified in order to suit their conditions. Through their style of communication known as *Iry talk, lyric language, soul language* or *dread talk* Rastafarians of Daveyton have forcefully preserved a sense of themselves as a social group. Their language is based on an alteration of the lexical structure of Jamaican Creole language. There is a very close connection between the language spoken by Rastafarians and reggae music. In most cases, the language is expressed through dub poetry, which is a specialised mode of expression intended to reflect people's experiences and their daily lives (Kedebe and Knottnerus, 1998: 4). It is through reggae that the world became aware of the existence of the Movement. It is through listening to reggae that Rastafarians in South Africa came to learn the *iry talk.* Reggae music besides being the vehicle that brought the language was also the carrier of other cultural aspects associated with the Movement.

Manganyi argues that language can be an instrument of oppression. All languages in South Africa have been made 'partisan' or have been linked to a particular ethnic group and, as a result, there is no common language to communicate a common meaning:

> In our history, those amongst us blacks who became alienated from their Africanness did so partly because they became absorbed into a new language idiom - a new way of experiencing, thinking and doing. It is significant that the state of culture and identity in South Africa is such that there is no 'language' free of partisan interests to communicate the new meanings that await South Africa in the future (Manganyi, 1981: 70).

As we have seen above, Rastafarians explicitly reject political or partisan affiliation. The origin of Rastafarian language was the result of their unwillingness to adopt the language of their oppressor, and the meanings inherent in particular words or phrases. Another important issue is the lack of single language that can be used to express common meanings for all South Africans. The *iry talk* enables Rastafarians from different language groups to communicate with each other. The process of *reasoning* would be hampered if there were no one

common language. To facilitate understanding, make a comment or stress a certain point during reasoning, the *iry talk* is sometimes used in conjunction with either Zulu or Sotho. Although these two languages are also spoken, the *iry talk* is the most frequently used language (*Observation*, 2nd February 2002). I*ry talk* is important in eroding ethnic and linguistic boundaries that would make communication difficult. The use of Zulu and Sotho in conjunction with *iry talk* (resulting in the emergence of a new language unique to Rastafarians of the *House of Fire*) makes the use of an interpreter unnecessary.

Rastafarian linguistic innovation shows how identity as self-assertion and in relation to the other is gained. Their manner of speaking in the first person is one of the most important innovations. The use of *I 'n I* (I and I or me and you) emphasises the importance of the first person (granting the other person equal first person status rather than the second or third person status of English personal nouns) reality of conscious self while it may be a constant reference to the unity of *Jah (*Denis-Constant,1995: 2). *'I n I'* is also used to refer to me and you or we (us) and them and as such can be analysed as a collective word emphasising that the self is more than the single, individual self, encompassing others as well. The concept of *I* has come to be applied in many instances. When referring to Selassie the First, he is referred to as Selassie *I,* which implies that he is one with all Rastafarians. The concept of *I* also refer to *Jah* because according to Rastafarians, God and Man are of the same image (*Observation*, 2nd February 2002).

The word *I* has also come to be used as a replacement for most of the initial letters of original English words. For example, the words vibration or creation have been changed to *iration* depending on the context within which they are used, assemble to *issemble,* unity to *inity*, and praises to *ises.* The usage of *I* in this way is not applicable to specific words because everybody is free to use it this way when he or she deems fit (*Ibid*).

Rastafarians feel that some words are wrongly applied. Instead of using the words 'international' and 'understand' they prefer to use the words, *outernational* and *overstand* (sometimes called *iverstand*). Thus, although the word international starts with an *I,* it is changed for the sake of meaning since once other nations are included together with one's own nation; it should be coming from the outside. As proof that someone is following what is being said one has to stand over, above or in control of, and not under knowledge (*Ibid*).

For the Rastafarians of Daveyton, *iry talk* has becomes the most important component of their identity. Their language is mostly influenced by Jamaican Creole, which most Rastafarians in Daveyton know through reggae music. As has been remarked, African languages are seldom used and *iry talk* is the medium of communication. What makes it easy for Rastafarians and others who are not Rastafarians is that, unlike all other languages, there are no rules governing the usage, pronunciation or spelling of words (*Ibid*). Therefore, the language is used freely and members are able to learn it fast. What makes the language easier for the Rastafarians of Daveyton to speak and to understand is that it is mixed with Zulu or Sotho (*Ibid*). The language spoken by Rastafarians of Daveyton is a blend of Jamaican Creole and African languages.

Apart from language, Rastafarians also use signs and expressions that are part of their daily interaction. These were initially meant to serve as a boundary separating them from society. One common sign is instead of shaking hands, they will touch with clenched fists. This style of greeting has developed into the touching of a closed fist with the thumbs rubbing. The most recent style of greeting that is not yet copied by non-Rastafarians is that of making a sign of Africa (*Observation, 16$^{h}$ February 2002*). Of importance is that they have also come up with certain expressions that only Rastafarians can interpret, such *More Fire* (appreciation of good work or as an encouragement); *yes I* (as for yes I see or agree); and W*ord Sound and Power* (known amongst them as a trinity is used when making peace between two disagreeing members) (*Ibid*). For them, the word is both sound and power because it is capable of quality, capable of being "sweet"

and of thrilling the hearer. It is power because it can inspire responses such as fear, anger or submission (*Ibid*; Chevannes, 1998b: 227).

The Rastafarian language is closely linked with reggae music, which originated in Jamaica during the late 1960's. It is not only the lyrics that are of significance, but also the rhythm of the music. Reggae is characterised by deep bass rhythms punctuated with heavy drumbeats. According to *Yellowman*, the heavy drumbeats are meant to send fear to Babylon, denounce the hypocrisy of the established order and herald the coming of a new society (*Interview, Yellowman, 09h January 2003).* Reggae music has the function of what Johnson-Hill (1996:16) calls *musica franca* for Rastafarians internationally, transcending ethnic, national and regional boundaries. It expresses the oppression of blacks in exile and their longing for home. For the Rastafarians of Daveyton reggae is for entertainment during dances, for it reminds them of liberation from apartheid and continuing social, cultural and religious injustices (*Interview, Humbleness, 23rd September 2003*).

Today reggae can be divided into a number of identifiable brands, namely, roots reggae, DJ (Disc Jockey) or Dub poetry, dance hall or ragga. All these brands are popular amongst the Rastafarians of Daveyton (*Interview, Bongane, 20h April 2003*). *Roots* music is original reggae that is played by artists such as Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Toots Hebert and Peter Tosh. DJ and Dub reggae is reggae music that is accompanied by a speech that may take the form of a poem such as that of Mutabaruka (a reggae poet who visited South Africa twice), I-Roy and U-Roy (the originator of DJ music) (*Ibid*). The importance of this genre of reggae is that it can be sung or performed by most Rastafarians in Daveyton during dances and at other social occasions. Although roots and dub reggae are played at dances, it is dance hall music that is predominantly played. This type of reggae is played, among others, by Ninjaman and Buju Banton (who also visited South Africa) (*Observation, 16th February 2002*). Reggae music, especially DJ and ragga has been influential to South African music. Popular South African DJs such as DJ Fresh (Youth FM) and Bob Mabena (Metro FM) are inspired by this genre of music.

Ragga music in South Africa takes a form of a mixture of reggae and local music sung, by amongst others, Rudeboy (*Interview, Bongane, 20 April 2003*).

Roots music, because it originated as a reaction to slavery, is about oppression. Dance hall music is new and is directed to the youth. It is about contemporary social problems facing them such as drugs, unemployment, crime and the importance of education (*Interview, Humbleness, 23rd September 2003*). There are, therefore, differences in terms of preference from one sect to the other. Roots music is popular amongst the elders and members of the *House of Fire* prefer this type of music (*Observation, 29th June 2002*). Roots music is also popular amongst non-Rastafarians. The other genres are popular amongst the members of the other two sects and most youth. Reggae does not form part of the process of *groundation* but is only played for listening at home or entertainment.

Although, as has been observed, Rastafarian language and reggae music were rigid in structure in the past, the same is less true today. The language has become popular among the youth who have incorporated it into their township lingo. It is also becoming popular in a written form since the introduction of Short Message Service (SMS) where messages sent through cellular phones are shortened or sometimes written in a language that is meant to impress. Like the *iri talk,* the language used in SMS is not governed by rules. Most of these messages (whether with or without the knowledge of the sender) are written in Rastafarian language, for example *luv* (for love), *de* (the), *dread* (bad) or *cool* (for fine).

## 7.5 Dreadlocks

According to Kebede and Knottnerus (2006: 1), dreadlocks (thick matted thatch of hair) are the most visible mark of Rastafarians. The most important purpose of dreadlocks is that there is divinity in them. They are believed to have been worn by African chiefs perhaps 6 000 years ago. If Afro hairstyles thirty years ago symbolised militancy, dreadlocks symbolise a more spiritual self-declaration, and a figurative locking with African ancestors. In this sense, Dreadlocks serve two

purposes. Firstly, they demarcate in-group and out-group distinctions, thereby acting as part of their external appearance symbolising the boundary of group membership. Secondly, dreadlocks reflect the defiance of Rastafarians against *Babylon,* expressing a positive rejection of the values of the dominant order. The wearing of dreadlocks by Rastafarians is in accordance with the Biblical injunction, which says:

> They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in the flesh (*Leviticus 21:5*).

Because of these beliefs, Rastafarians do not cut their hair but allow it to grow naturally into long locks that are symbolic of a lion's curls. As already seen, they view the lion as a perfect African symbol of freedom, power and independence. Explaining the importance of dreadlocks, Johnson-Hill (1996:14) says that they evoke a troublesome and complicated relationship between Rastafarianism and *Babylon* and are intended to invoke sentiments of Black Nationalism. According to Gondwe (2002: 10), they symbolise Rastafarian roots, contrasting the straight, blonde look of the white man and establishment, and has as a result come to symbolise rebellion against the system. For Rastafarians, dreadlocks and living a clean life are part of a vow they take once they decide to join the Movement. They should be prepared to withstand any negativity from society (*Interview, Monty, 04th January 2004*).[85] Gondwe agrees and observes that:

> Dreadlocks are described as the external symbol of Rastafari identity; they are a 'crown', a sign of the covenant between Jah Rastafari and the believer. Hair symbolises strength (as in the Judaeo-Christian heritage) and is a symbol to identify believers and someone wearing them should be strong enough to accept the tribulations and challenges that come with having them (Gondwe, 2002:10).

The importance of dreadlocks is also expressed in the chants they sing during *grounation*. Chant number 25 from the hymnbook entitled *Fire Fire Seazers and Combs* (destroy scissors and combs) is against cutting or combing one's hair. Scissors and combs, according to this chant, should be destroyed because any

[85] This view is however not shared with some members of the society who see dreadlocks as dirty.

Rastafarian using them cannot enter Mount Zion. Rastafarians are always encouraged to grow their dreadlocks without fear of *Babylon.* Before dreadlocks became a fashion they used to be one of the most important features that made Rastafarians distinguishable from other members of society.

Dreadlocks have always made Rastafarians to be viewed negatively. This attitude has since been changing, as indicated by one Rastafarian:

> Before dreadlocks became fashionable, members of the society saw them as dirty. This is what made people to develop a negative attitude towards our Movement because some people even came to the conclusion that we do not wash them. This is no longer the case because dreadlocks have become a fashion as they are worn by almost everybody. Today you see school children, university students, teachers, celebrities and ordinary people wearing them (*Observation, 14th June 2002*).

In Gondwe's view, "Dreadlocks, now considered fashionable, by celebrities, both in and out of context." Gondwe, 2002:14). The difference between dreadlocks worn by Rastafarians and those worn as style is that while the latter can be fashioned by hairdressers in salons, Rastafarians' locks are natural and no chemicals are used in matting them. The most important difference between these types of dreadlocks is that the fashion will come and go while Rastafarian dreadlocks have been here from the beginning will last as long as the Movement lasts (*Observation, 14th June 2002*).

Attitudes to dreadlocks have undergone a recent change. This has in a sense changed the public perception of Rastafarianism. Even though dreadlocks are an important external symbol of Rastafarianism, they have been a barrier to people aspiring to join the Movement. Society's perception of dreadlocks changed after 1994. Before that, many members of society saw dreadlocks as dirty, leading to the generally held belief that Rastafarians do not wash. However, with more people starting to wear them, Rastafarians are gradually becoming recognised and their appearance accepted by society. Ironically, the feature that used to make Rastafarians unpopular, their dreadlocks, has become the most popular hairstyle with almost all hair salons doing them.

This thesis has established that not all people wearing dreadlocks are Rastafarians, but not all Rastafarians wear dreadlocks. Within the *House of Fire* there are devoted Rastafarians who do not wear them, who even serve on some of the committees.

## 7.6 *Ganja*, Its Use and the Controversy Surrounding It

The smoking of *ganja* (marijuana) started in late 1930 when Howell established the Ethiopian Salvation Society, centred on the Pinnacle commune in Jamaica. From then, this practice has become the principal ritual of the Rastafarian movement (Clarke, 1994: 46-47).

> As a liberator of feelings and ideas, *ganja* has through the ages been, and continues to be, a great force in our cultures and civilisations, each of which has named it uniquely- *bhang* and *ganja* in India, *kabak* in Turkey, *takrouri* in Tunisia, *kif* in Algeria and Morocco, *maconha* in Brazil, and *Marijuana* in Mexico and the United States (*Ibid*).

*Ganja* has been important in many cultures and through many civilisations. The difference perhaps between those communities and Rastafarians is that it is more central in the lives of Rastafarians than in any known community in history. *Ganja* features in almost every aspect of their lives. It is most importantly utilised for sacramental purposes as well as a ritual during the process of *reasoning* (Gondwe, 2002:10). The sacramental function of *ganja* in meditation is to lift up the spirit, the *I* within (inner self), to communicate with *Jah*. Rastafarians communicate with *Jah* by this medium. In this sense, it functions as incense that accompanies *ises* to *Jah*. Rastafarians generally see it as an integral part of their belief systems in their daily experiences (*Observation, 09th March 2002*).

Rastafarians call it by different names, such as the *holy herb, hola (holy) ishence, kali, sacred weed* or just *weed* (*Jahug*, 1992: 9). The different names Rastafarians use to refer to *ganja* suggest its sacramental function. Apart from the sacramental function of *ganja* (which they claim was given to them by *Jah*); it is for them an important barrier that separates them from *Babylon.*

> By means of the holy herb which The Creator give man for meat, HIM servant separates himself from Babylon midst. Man purify man temple by burning this divine *Ishence* within (*Jahug, 1992:9*).

Its uses are very extensive because the purposes for which it is used are religious, spiritual and medicinal among others. The basis for its general use is Biblically substantiated by the following texts:

> "He causeth the grass for the cattle, and the herb for the service of man" (Psalms 104:14)
> ". . . thou shalt eat the herb of the earth" (Genesis 3:18)
> ". . . eat every herb of the land" (Exodus 10:12)
> ". . . Better is the dinner of herb where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith" (Proverbs 15:17)[86]

They also defend their use of *ganja* by saying that it is even written in the book of Revelations 22 that we must eat the fruit of the tree that bears fruit 12 times a year (*Pace Magazine,* July 1995).

Rastafarians demand that the government should legalise the smoking of *ganja,* which is, according to them, based on freedom of worship as enshrined in the South African Constitution. Its use, they argue, should be recognised by the government as religious sacrament, and its criminalisation is seen to be against the spirit of the constitution by declaring that:

> We are the citizens of this country. We demand our constitutional rights to practise our religion. We are in Africa and we demand an African perspective and the Rasta religion to emerge (*Ibid*).

The use and smoking of *ganja* has been the main cause of confrontation between Rastafarians and police in countries: Jamaica, the United States, Britain and South Africa. Similarly, the question of whether *ganja* should be decriminalised has also been an issue of debate. It has led to various countries adopting different laws in an attempt to regulate its use. For example, under the current law in Jamaica the possession of a small quantity of *ganja* such as one cigarette is punishable by a small fine or up to 10 days in jail (*Independent on Line*, 12th February 2002). To date, the use of *ganja* by Rastafarians is still an issue for

[86] Rastafarian Religion in http://www.aspects.net/~nick/religion.htm, p. 2.

debate by Jamaican law-makers. The debate centres on the question of whether it should be made legal for adults to smoke privately in small quantities.

The South African Commission, known as the National Commission on *Ganja,* appointed in 2002 to investigate the issue, recommended that *ganja* be decriminalised for private, medicinal and religious use by adults (*Ibid*). According to the recommendations of the commission, the use of *ganja* is to remain illegal for minors and in public places, and the cultivation and its exportation prohibited (*Ibid*). This can be seen as a compromise on the part of the government because it means that Rastafarians could smoke freely during their gatherings without being harassed by the police. In the United States of America, the Supreme Court ruled 8-0 against allowing the medicinal use of *ganja,* prompting decriminalisation groups to say they will appeal on constitutional grounds for the decision to be overturned. In France, the Health Ministry announced that it would carry out studies to assess any therapeutic benefits from smoking *ganja (Mail & Guardian, 18th May 2001).* In spite of opposition to the legalisation of *ganja,* most countries seem to be looking at ways to legalise it. In Malawi, for example, it is a major crop and there is increasing debate over legalising it so that it could replace tobacco as a major export (*Mail & Guardian,* 28th May 2000).

The question of decriminalisation or legalisation of *ganja* in South Africa remains a burning one and opinions on this remain divided. A good example of this is a case involving members of the South African touring cricket team in the Caribbean, who were each fined R10 000 for smoking *ganja.* On returning to South Africa, some people felt that they should be hanged, drawn and quartered while some felt it was just a harmless party activity performed in private and not an important issue (*Ibid*).

*Ganja* is seen by those who support its legalisation as the world's most valuable and versatile natural resource that has many uses: stems for fabric, fuel, paper and commercial use; seeds for food and oil; flowers for healing and relaxation; rooted in the soil to control erosion and mudslide (*Jahug*, 1992:29). Those who lobby for

its legalisation in South Africa, including non-Rastafarians, argue that smoking is rooted in an African subculture and that those against it are not prepared to acknowledge this. It is argued that psychologically, *ganja* has made many people throughout the world aware of themselves and others, more receptive and more open to sharing other people's perspectives (*City Press,* 28th May 2002).

The debate around the legalisation of *ganja* is determined by whether one looks at it from the legal, political, medical or religious point of view. The following are opinions of two important South Africans on the question of *ganja:* Helen Suzman, a veteran politician, maintains that *ganja:*

> is not nearly as harmful as alcohol and notes further that it has excellent medicinal and therapeutic uses with a growing international movement to decriminalise it. Those who are against decriminalisation are blamed for adopting *ganja* policies from the United States, which blames all of its countless social ills on drugs and includes the *ganja* plant under its heading of drugs (*Ibid*).

The conservative view blames *ganja* for most social ills, such as crime. Suzman, arguing from the liberal platform, sees the problems facing society today as having nothing to do with *ganja* and proposes instead diagnosis of what is actually wrong with society, such as lack of social welfare. Judge Albie Sachs recognises that the issue goes beyond drugs and still has to be resolved. He:

> likened Rastafarians to gypsies who form a group that doesn't quite "fit in". Their lifestyle, beliefs and appearances all seem strange to those in conventional mainstream, but when they demand that their religious freedom be recognised by allowing them to smoke *ganja* without police interference, they raise an issue that cuts across society (*Sunday Times,* 20th May 2001). Judge Sachs sees the smoking and use of *ganja* to be so entrenched in various South African cultures and argue that the police will never win its war against it (*Ibid).*

Rastafarians feel that a special identity card and a permit to transport it legally be issued for membership of the Rastafari National Council (*Sunday Times,* 20th May 2001).

In spite of these convincing arguments for the decriminalisation of *ganja,* it seems a long way before it will be the case in South Africa. In the meantime, a draft paper, commissioned by the Central Drug Authority declares it is illegal to possess, use and trade in it. The paper is to guide the government's policy on *ganja* in the National Drug Master Plan for 2004 to 2009. The leading author of the paper*,* Dorothy Malaka, takes note of its legalisation in Europe and Canada and says that easing control in South Africa would be premature (*Sunday Times*, 12th September 2004). This in essence means that the issue has to be kept on hold until 2009 while police and Rastafarians continue to fight over it during demonstrations and marches such as the ones of July 1995 in Cape Town and of May 2001 in Johannesburg (*Pace Magazine,* July 1995; *Sowetan*, 18th May 2001).

In South Africa, it is hard to have consensus. The problem is not whether smoking *ganja* is generally a good or a bad thing but more a question of whether one can fight for his or her own right to smoke it. The decision to allow Rastafarians to smoke freely in South Africa differs from judge to judge or from attorney to attorney. Two cases can be used to demonstrate this, namely that of Gareth Prince, as we have seen, and of Detective Sergeant Zenzele Dlomo. Prince lost a legal battle to continue the Rastafarian observance of smoking *ganja* while at the same time practising as an attorney (*Sowetan,* 18th May 2001). While Prince was not allowed to practise as an attorney because he smoked *ganja,* the Kwazulu-Natal state attorney Jackie Henriques granted Dlomo permission to wear his dreadlocks. Like Prince, Dlomo "admits to smoking the *holy herb* during prayer and outside his police duties while the law requires him to arrest anyone else using or smoking it." (*Drum Magazine*, 11th November 1998: 20-21).

> it is not that the youth should not smoke, but that they should be guided. The elders are the ones who reveal it to them. When you see your father smoking cigarette you always want to experience. The youths see it from us and that is why we cannot stop them. They should be thought the ways of the Most High so that when they use it, it should be according to His ways (*Ibid*).

These ways of the *Jah* are contained in the Bible in First Corinthians Chapter 2: 6 which reads: "Yet I do proclaim... John the Baptist said that the ones who are coming will baptise with fire." *Psalm 18: 7.* Some argue that:

> parental guidance is necessary for our own children and for those who are not biologically ours. For those who are not biologically our children consent from parents for their child to attend the *binghi* should be obtained to avoid being seen by the society as abusing minors. Some were even strict and argue that the *licking* of *ganja* by the youth spoils the reputation of the Movement. If they come here they should not come for *licking.* If they are underage, they should be prevented from *licking* in the house. We must be strict; they should come for knowledge not for *licking (Ibid).*

A counter argument is that if youths are not allowed to *lick* it, it means that *ganja* is dangerous and harmful. A solution was proposed: first, it is important to know and understand that Rastafarianism is not about *ganja* — but *ganja* is part of Rastafarianism so that the two cannot be separated. It was agreed that the *house* was to work according to theocracy guidelines; the issue should be referred to a special committee. The youths have to be involved in decision-making process.

## 7.7 Rituals and Celebrations

Set apart from a society that they see as different, Rastafarians of Daveyton have developed their own ways of performing certain rituals: burials and sanctifications. In addition, they have devised their own way of celebrating important events such, as *earthday* (birthdays) and marriages within the *house*. Performing and celebrating these in their own way is very important in that it confirms the completeness of their separate identity. Their inability to do these things on their own means that they need to depend on other people (priests from other churches) who would perform them without any consideration of the Rastafarian way of life. The value of these events, especially burials and marriages, are in their ability to attract a large number of Rastafarians at a time.

### 7.7.1 Burials and Sanctifications

Rastafarians are supportive of each other when a member dies. They take it upon

themselves to bury their dead or *planting of a seed* as they call it. The concept *planting of a seed* emanates from their belief that Rastafarians do not die but they pass-on. Therefore, the euphemism for saying a person died, is to say he "passed-on". Funerals are at all times attended by Rastafarians from many other *houses* and priests from these *houses* conduct them jointly. News about the death and funeral arrangements is communicated to other houses through cellular phones (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny*, 05th January 2003).

During the fieldwork, I was able to attend two funerals on 19 October 2002, of members who died of ill health. One was of a woman who was a member of the *House of Fire*, and the other was a Rastafarian elder, *Ras* Thabo, who was not attached to the *house*. Since all Rastafarians know each other irrespective of affiliation, members of the *House of Fire* were obliged to attend and bury *Ras* Thabo as well. Because the *House of Fire* is the only organised house in the area, its priesthood, together with those from other houses in the broader region, plays a central role in overseeing the arrangements and the process of *planting the seed* (*Observation,* 19th October 2002; 03rd January 2003).

A common characteristic of funerals conducted according to traditional African and Rastafarian practice is that there is a night vigil during which attendants will sing and priests preach for the entire night. Like other people, they do take their dead to the mortuary and use undertakers but they conduct the service themselves in the Rastafarian tradition. Just as they attend funerals of non-Rastafarians,[87] people who are not Rastafarians also attend their funerals. Members from all over Gauteng arrive in the afternoon before the *planting of the seed.* For the whole night[88] there is singing and humming. During the singing, one song can be sung for a very long time. This is because only specific songs are sung of which there are only a few. Priests from different houses will share in conducting the night vigil. As in other gatherings, a large quantity *ganja* is smoked during the night

[87] This is contrary to the belief that Rastafarians do not burry their dead or attends funerals.
[88] This is a common ritual (of holding a night vigil) practised by Rastafarians that is part of African tradition.

(*Observation,* 03rd January 2003). Most attendees arrive very early in the morning. It is a common practice of Rastafarians to *plant the seed* first thing in the morning.

Before leaving for the graveyard, the home is purified by sprinkling everything and everywhere with *ganja* water, and this procedure is repeated in the burial ground where the last Psalm is recited before the actual *planting*. The purpose of sprinkling is to cleanse the place and clear the way by removing evil spirits. From the graveyard, everybody goes back to the house of the deceased where food is served. *I-tal* food is served to all, whether one is a Rastafarian or not, and they eat without complaining about lack of salt or meat in the food (*Ibid*).

A year after a member's death a tribute is held in his/her memory only for one night (*Ibid*). The tribute can take place in the park/open field or the home of the deceased. If it is held in the park, it is accompanied by a dance and if at home there will only be singing and drumming. During the tribute a photograph of the deceased is organised and placed in a position where all can see it and his/her life history is read and speeches made.

As seen, sanctification is central in the lives of Rastafarians as in the case of the *Milchezedec Order* where members of the priesthood should be sanctified in the river. In the *House of Fire* only children are sanctified, which usually takes place during local gatherings. Members should inform the *house* of their intention to bring their children along so that it is known how many children will be sanctified. Sanctifications do not always take place and a number of children can sometimes be sanctified at a time. While girls can be sanctified from four months of age, boys are sanctified from three months. This is in line with the period the mother should wait for purification after giving birth. Coconut and olive oils are used for sanctification. Children being sanctified are passed from one priest to the other. Boys are sanctified first, then girls by a priest who anoints them with coconut and olive oils. These oils are used because they are considered to be pure and natural. After the anointment, the parents of the sanctified children drink the

oils. A Godmother and Godfather are chosen from the elders of the *house* (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny*, 05th January 2003).

Sanctification sometimes takes place at a regional level where all the *houses* on the East Rand will gather and conduct one big sanctification event. Chant 98 - *Mother of Salem* is sung during the process that is interpreted by members of the house of fire as follows:

> mothers brought their children to the King Rastafari and when his strict assistants saw them he chased them away. The King then saw them turning back and called to come under his protection. The mothers show delight to the kindness shown by the King because they consider their children lucky for knowing the king and bible unlike other children who never heard his name or what he said or read the bible. The last paragraph of the chant asks for blessing from *Jah* and for the wicked to obey (*Observation*, 03rd January 2003).

### 7.7.2 *Earthday* and Marriage Celebrations

*Earthdays* (birthdays) and marriages are usually similar in the way they are celebrated. They are always accompanied by a dance and as a result, one cannot differentiate between them and a dance. *Earthdays* are usually celebrated on Sundays to replace a dance. The celebration takes place at the house of the one who is *earthdaying.* He notifies the organisers of the dance, books the music system and buys some *ganja* for smoking and making tea. Not much takes place during the celebration. No speeches are made; no gifts are exchanged, while dancing to the reggae beats overshadow the celebration.

Years can pass by without a marriage-taking place within the Rastafarian community of Daveyton. One marriage that was supposed to take place did not materialise because the bride who was to marry *Ras Kebra* on September 2001 died before it could be celebrated. The wedding ceremony usually takes two days. Like other wedding celebrations, one day is celebrated in the bride's place and the other in the groom's. The celebration is attended mainly by Rastafarians. Celebrations are characterised by singing, reggae music, dancing, eating *I-tals* and smoking of *ganja* (*Interview*, *Binghi Bunny*, 05th January 2003).

There is no great difference in the way marriages are conducted and celebrated between Rastafarian and African customary ones. The only difference is that within the Rastafarian marriage there is a choice between two types of marriage, the one of the crown and one of the ring. In the marriage of the crown one swears that he/she will never marry again whether the partner dies or they divorce (*Ibid*).

## 7.8 Conclusion

It is clear that Rastafarian identity is more than a question of appearance. It is not simply about wearing dreadlocks or green, yellow and red colours. Unlike most social and religious movements wherein members can be identified by a few aspects, Rastafarian identity comprises all those components which, when put together, constitute the concepts of identity and culture. There are many characteristics that Rastafarians can be identified by, ranging from clothing, hairstyle, lifestyle (including food), language, music, smoking of *ganja, and* their of celebrating *earthdays* and marriages. This is what makes Rastafarianism a way of life distinct from the rest of society.

The origin of Rastafarian cultural identity is a response to a combination of oppressive conditions that blacks faced in the world. These include slavery in the Americas, colonialism in Africa, and apartheid in South Africa. In the township of Daveyton, Rastafarianism were discontented with the existing religious, economic, cultural, social and political situation, and the desire to be different from a 'corrupt' and 'evil' society. Identity formation amongst Rastafarians of Daveyton has continued from apartheid South Africa into the new South Africa. The reason for expressing a different identity under the apartheid government was to resist the influence of western culture; in the new dispensation, it is due to lack of recognition and disillusionment by the new democratic government. Thus, the desire to express a unique identity was the result of disillusionment with the political system and of lack of development in a place like Daveyton.

Expressions of rejection to Babylon take many forms. Culturally, Rastafarians prefer to speak their own language (*iry talk)* when communicating with each other, listen only to reggae music and wear colours and symbols that are trademarks of their cultural identity. The smoking of *ganja* and the wearing of dreadlocks are both interpreted as a sign of their rejection of Babylon. As in other cultures and religions, the Rastafarians of Daveyton have their own set of rituals which concern life and death.They conduct funerals on their own, sanctify members of their Movement, and celebrate occasions, such as marriages and *earthdays.* Rastafarian cultural identity is composed not only of cultural institutions, but also of symbols and presentations. "It has become a discourse; a way of constructing meanings that influences and organises both their actions and conceptions of themselves. Rasta symbolism has been the social consciousness that has sustained their social world," (Bosch, 1996: 13).

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## Rastafarian Worldview

Johnson-Hill (1996: 3) has described Rastafarianism as one of the most widely diffused and least understood movements of our time. Gondwe (2002: 9) describes it as the orthodoxy of observance, in which every Rastafarian is free to choose how they *sight up upon Jah (*look up to God). In this way, Rastafarianism becomes an open-ended proposition, an open path for one's life. Its open-endedness and wide diffusion is seen in the lack of obvious consensus amongst members about their conception of life and the world, which has made it so difficult for outsiders to understand.

This chapter seeks to uncover the life world of the Rastafarians of Daveyton and evaluate how they fit into the mainstream community. This is done by looking at their underlying philosophy of life to answer the following questions: what is it that the Movement stands for, and what does it reject in the world? The chapter also examines Rastafarians' concepts of creation, life and death. Data is based on the interpretation of recorded poems, speeches, discussions and interviews that reflects their point of view about life, the world and society.

This chapter samples how respondents to the questionnaire perceive the Movement, the extent of their knowledge of it, and how well they understand what it stands for. Data is based on a questionnaire distributed to a number of members of society in order to elicit a broad range of views and interpretations. The questions asked focus on the extent to which the community is aware of the existence of the Movement and what they know about it. Some questions concentrate on how people perceive Rastafarianism and whether they think it has a place in society. Other questions deal with the position of government with regard to the Movement and those that are meant to establish what people's

general feelings are about it. In order for a sample to include people from different sections of the community, one hundred questionnaires were issued to teachers and students of Daveyton Senior Secondary School, and to students, professional and general workers of the East Rand Campus of the University of Johannesburg.

## 8.1 Underlying Philosophy

Some common features of Rastafarianism around the world are that the Movement does not align itself with any political party, social, religious or economic organisation.[89] It also rejects traditional folk and Christian missionary legacies (Johnson-Hill, 1996: 3-4). As already alluded to, the worldview of Rastafarians is a melting pot of ideas obtained from a variety of books and teachings that elevate the black race and condemn their oppression. Some of these are based on African struggles for equality and they include among others, Haile Selassie, Marcus Garvey, Africa and Pan Africanism. Other sources used are those that attack or criticise imperialism or the policies of the West, particularly the United States of America and Britain.

The Bible seems to be central in the way Rastafarians interpret the world around them, although they do not want to accept it. It would be true to say that the Bible is simultaneously rejected and accepted. Three opinions became clear during observation of *reasoning* concerning the question of its place within the Movement. For some it should not be used at all because there are other books that can be used such as the *Holy Piby, Members of the New Race Teachings of H.I.M Haile Selassie I, Jahug* and the *Kebra Negus.* Some who believe in this view even suggest that they 'should *bwin* the Bible', a slogan usually used when speaking against its use. Responding to the question of whether to use the Holy Bible or not, one Rastafarian observes:

[89] It is only recently with the formation of the African Union where they are represented by Ashantiwa Archer (who is a woman). Their responsibility within the Union is to advise on matters concerning African unity.

> The Bible is not holy for *In'I* that they should look for other books that are relevant. In using the Bible, they should be able to differentiate between what is wrong and what is right because many things were added and left-out when King James came with his own version. The Christian Bible has been copied from other books such as the *Kebra Negus,* which is the earliest Ithiopian Bible and, which is the oldest Bible on earth. The Bible is therefore not very important to us and we should instead use writings about African history (*Interview, Jah Power, 16th August 2003*).

Here the St James version is the one being rejected under suspicion that it has been perverted by English influences. An original African bible is sought, while the Bible is attacked; Christianity is not recognised and is criticised. Religion itself comes under fire apparently for its rigidity and human limitations. It is because of its Christian teaching that the Bible is rejected.

> The cross is a symbol of death, hence it is found everywhere symbolising death (on graves or cemetery), the swastika is taken from the cross, symbolising the four corners of the world. Religion should not be confused with spirituality. Religion is a set of rules drawn up by human beings. The same cannot be said about Rastafarianism, our Movement thus cannot be seen as a religion because it talk about astrology, politics, culture, the cosmic world, mind, body and soul that is why it is above religion (*Ibid*).

This opinion is further qualified by Priest Binghi Bunny who explains the major difference between Rastafarianism and Christianity. He says that Rastafarianism is not a religion because religions are created by men to enable them to control others. Amongst other tools which try to control people, Christianity, especially the so-called *The Holy Bible* or King James Version became the most successful (*Interview, Jah Power, 27th December 2003*). Another generally held opinion amongst the Rastafarians of Daveyton is that Christianity is a white man's creation that teaches Black people that God is a white man, Jesus is white and all the angels are white, while Satan is black (*Pace Magazine*, July 1995).[90] Rastafarians from other houses who still harbour a negative attitude towards whites commonly share this view (*Observation,* 26th July 2003).

The second opinion consists of those who believe that the Bible should be central during *grounation. S*ome go as far as to propose that it should be used as in Christian churches where the preacher preaches according to its teachings. One

[90] It is important to add here that Rastafarians of Daveyton are also against traditional African belief in ancestors.

discontented Rastafarian went to the extent of asking a question: "What is the position of Rastafarians about Jesus Christ?" He says that one of the priests is misleading them by saying (Jesus Christ) "never lived because it is also written in the Bible where it was prophesy that the King will be born and his name will be Jesus," (*Ibid*). One member responded that:

> There is a difference between Jesus and Christ and that Rastafarians believe in Christ not Jesus. For us the word Christ means the light and in Old Testament, it is also written that a king will be born and his name will be Joshua. For Rastafarians, the Old Testament is more relevant than the new one because it is the first word. Jesus is therefore a creation of *Babylon* and a way of making money through taxation and Christ can mean any light and the light of Rastafarians is Haile Selassie (*Observation,* 14th April 2002).

This is a radical critique of Christianity for its belief in Jesus as a human being, a fictional being created to satisfy the material greed of Babylon. The third group comprises those who believe that the Bible should be used but with great caution. *Kebra I,* for example, maintains that it should be read for the sake of knowledge and because it contains names of people we always refer to, names such as Jeremiah, Jacob and Christ (*Interview, Kebra*, 14th May 2003). They base their argument on the premise that the original messages have been altered, that Rastafarians should be able to identify what is original and what has been added (*Observation,* 14th April 2002). The best way of approaching it, according to this opinion, is to be mindful and critical.

Yet what brings all of them together is a revision of basic Christian beliefs, strongly flavoured with suspicion of its slaving and colonial connections. In spite of a lack of common opinion concerning its usefulness in the Movement, the Bible seems to be central, not only during *reasoning* but as a source of inspiration to almost all Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* especially during the process of *groundation*. This is evident since most of the members of the *house* have a Bible at home, which they often carry to the *binghi* (*Observation,* 02nd August 2003).

In addition, they also have other Rastafarian books. Rastafarianism as a religion is based on the Bible. The Psalms are taken from the Bible and their beliefs are very much linked to personalities such as King David and King Solomon. Contrary to the generally held belief that Rastafarians only refer to the Old Testament, the entire Bible is used as in mainstream *houses*. The Rastafarian worldview is thus largely shaped by the teachings contained in the Bible. Their concept of loving one another, doing well, rejecting violence, crime and war, and living in peace and unity are lessons taken from the Bible. Their stance against homosexuality and prostitution also reflects the views of the Bible.

The book entitled *Members of the New Race Teachings of H.I.M Haile Selassie I* and *Jahug* are frequently used in conjunction with the Bible. They are always used as sources of reference during *reasoning*. They contain guidelines, according to which Rastafarians should live. Information in the former is considered to be the direct utterance of Haile Selassie and contains his teachings in all aspects of life. The book is viewed by Rastafarians as a summary of life's instructions. It contains Selassie's teachings on happiness, education, law of life, leadership, love, loyalty, man and technology, communication, defence, obedience, nurses, police, teachers, thriftiness, unity, world peace, progress and productivity.[91] It is from these teachings that Rastafarians draw most of their inspiration. Interpreting the content of the book to members, Wiseprophet says:

> The book talks about the youths who have *overstanding of livity*, it says that there are those who are not wicked and these are those who walk with Jah. In this book, knowledge and love are seen to be complementary, love is knowledge and without knowledge, there can be no love (*Observation,* 02nd August 2003).

Rastafarians have put together the Christian Bible and texts from African struggles for emanicipation in an attempt to come up with a unique identity. Whilst using the Bible as a source of reference and inspiration, they foster an intense pride in black history[92], culture, African values and a firm belief in Jah Rastafari and His laws. Their political philosophy is largely based on Pan African ideology and ideas propagated by African leaders who fought against

[91] *Members of the New Race Teachings of H.I.M Haile Selassie I.*
[92] They prefer readings that are about African History especially ancient history.

colonialism and the oppression of blacks. The most important of these for the Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* are the teachings of Marcus Garvey; he is considered to be the prophet of the Movement. They believe in the idea of African unity, which is fostered through ideas of leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah, Malcolm X and Robert Sobukwe, who they consider great Nyabhinghi warriors. The teachings and ideas of Pan Africanism as propagated by Sobukwe are quoted during *reasoning* about the need for Africa to unite (*Observation,* 02nd August 2003).

This thesis has mentioned that Rastafarians reject African traditional beliefs, such as appeasing ancestors or consulting *sangomas* when sick or in times of crisis. They also do not believe in consulting medical doctors or taking western medicine and treatment. They believe in the use of herbs to cure diseases. When a member is sick, he or she is not supposed to consult a doctor, take tablets or be operated on.[93] This is the responsibility of the Herbal Committee.

Rastafarianism as a way of life is thus a convergence of a number of ideas derived from various sources. The Bible is the most important source in determining their religious life. Nevertheless, while it is important for members to have common knowledge about the underlying philosophy behind Rastafarianism, the same is not true about how they conceptualise creation *(iration)*, life (*livity)* and death (*passing-on)*. When *reasoning* about these ideas, the main aim, it seems, is not to persuade members to believe, but to share information.

## 8.2 *Iration, Livity* and *Passing-on*

Although it is taken as a fact amongst Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* that *Jah* is the father of *iration,* there is no one common explanation about how creation originated. At the same time, they reject the Christian theory of the origin of

[93] All members do not always adhere to this. *Jah Youth* once demanded an answer to his question of what is it they must do if for example his child falls sick and challenged everybody to be true and tell him where they take their sick children if not to the doctor. Like many other issues, this one remains critical and controversial and seldom features as a topic for reasoning.

humankind. In the absence of one general explanation, each member comes with his own hypothesis that is discussed during *reasoning.* Their theories are usually based on books that they might have read. The most common opinion is the one based on a book written by David Icke entitled *Children of the Matrix* (*Observation,* 02nd August 2003). The book is not about the origin of humankind, but about how an interdimensional race has come to control the world and as such substantiates Rastafarian belief that the world has been under the control of *Babylon* for a long time.[94] Babylon is seen to be an inter-dimensional race.

Basing their reasoning on Icke's book, members of the *House of Fire* differentiate between the types of people on earth, the original inhabitants and those who came from another planet. For example, the newcomers amongst whites are those with blue eyes and are classified as belonging to the 'reptile race', what is called the Free Masonic Movement (freemasons). These people are believed to have fallen from the planet series (Satan).

> The planet called series was destroyed when it crashed with the planet earth (causing it to separate into continents). As it falls into the bottomless pit (presumably the black hole) some of its inhabitants remained on earth, a group that constitutes freemasons. The freemasons believe in minority rule and want maintain the existing world order. They are the masters of technology and credited with the construction of the pyramids. They are seen to aliens who feed on blood hence they are warmongers. The Nazi, Rome, the British and American governments are an example of this race. Rome, America and Britain are in alliance to control the world (*Observation*, 23rd March 2002; *Interview*, *Monty*, 04th January 2004).

The idea of aliens is common amongst Rastafarians of the House of Fire and the word has come to be equated with *Babylon.* Poems are even written and recited about it. For instance the one entitled *Aliens want to Enslave Mankind.* According to this poem the world is depicted as a city, but a city of illusion. Life in this city is dominated by religion and *politrics.* People are made to think that the world will come to an end and people will rise from the dead, an idea that is promoted by these aliens to make it easy for them to control the world. This city is referred to as *de death city*, where men and aliens live side-by-side, with aliens setting traps for

[94] This is the reason why they reject not only the old world order (based on slavery) but also the new world order and calls for its end.

humankind to fall in. This poem is thus a calling to people to open their eyes to this situation and convert to Rastafarianism, which will save them from the aliens.

Rastafarians see and explain everything around the number twelve, such as the twelve planets, twelve tribes of Judah, and twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. According to them, the *irits* of each human is believed to have originated from one of the twelve planets and when one dies, it (the spirit) returns to the planet of its origin. This whole idea of *irits,* body and death is expressed as thus:

> The human body is like a house accommodating the *irits.* The main reason we Rastafarians argue that there is no death is based on the fact that *Jah* created mankind only once, since the first *iration,* man has been in existence and never dies but like a tree he changes. If man dies, it means that there would be nobody left on earth. The *irits* manifest itself in the flash and we are all reincarnated souls. So death is for the physical (the body or flash), when the flash is tired, it dies off but the *irits* will manifest itself in another flash. As we are, we are the embodiment of the *irits* of our ancestors (*Interview, Wiseprophet*, 14th July 2003).

Two things can be derived from the above quote. The first is that man is taken to refer not to an individual but to people in general, which is in line with the concept of *In'I.* The second is the belief in reincarnation as opposed to the Christian idea of final judgement.

Women play an important role in the lives of Rastafarian. They place great value on marriage, sound family life, and always take part in child rearing. This is expressed in the *Nyahbinghi Order Theocracy Reign* as follows*:*

> "..... Creation is administered by two complementary heads, male and female... thus sexual equity is a fundamental principle of nature for the harmonisation of the Rastafarian family. It is of the concept of the Rastafari *inity* male and female are the continuation of each other" (*Jahug*, 1992: 21)[95]

Although women are not allowed to do some things such as preaching, uncover their hair, or wear clothes that do not cover their knees,[96] they are treated with

[95]This is the reason why Rastafarians of Daveyton have changed the Nyahbinghi Creed to include *Queens.*

[96] The covering of hair and knees is not only practiced by Rastafarians. It is also the practice of members of the Zion Christian Church.

great respect by their men folk. As *Jah Youth* puts it, "because we call them *queens* we treat them like *queens,"* (*Interview*, *Jah Youth*, 21st January 2003). Unlike other gatherings or celebrations where cooking food is left for women, Rastafarian men are involved in cooking, sometimes more than the women (*Observation,* 09th March 2002).

Members of the *House of Fire* always encourage each other to get married. Marriage is a major step to adulthood. An unmarried man, no matter his age, cannot be considered an *elder*. As has been seen, most Rastafarians do not believe in polygamy. Their children, whether boys or girls, tend to spend more time with their fathers than with their mothers. More often than not, those who attend the *binghi* come with their fathers whilst their mothers sometimes remain at home. The reason for this is that men, just as they take part in cooking, are also active in child rearing. To show the importance of family life, members of the *House of Fire* always set aside Sundays to be spent with their families either by visiting other families or attending gatherings together (*Ibid*).

## 8.3 *Chanting Down Babylon*

As has been seen, the ultimate goal of Rastafarianism is the total destruction of *Babylon*. The word is derived from the activities of the infamous king of the biblical Babylon who, according to Rastafarians, inspired the Persian, Greek, Roman, British and American oppressive regimes (Johnson-Hill,1996: 14; Kebede and Knottnerus, 1998:8). The term was initially used to refer to slave masters, and the initial aim of Rastafarianism was to destroy all slavers. Its meaning was later extended (after slavery was abolished) to include the values associated with the upper tier of society, the established churches, the official media, the colonial system, the legal system, the police, political leaders, and the mafia. The word has also come to refer to a place where evil things, according to their judgement, take place such as brothels and shebeens or to any person doing bad things. The word *Babylon* refers to anything that Rastafarianism stands against.

Rastafarians of Daveyton are against celebrating Christian days such as Christmas. They see it as one of the rituals of Christianity and the joy associated with it as a wonderful mess in a poem entitled *Christmas*.[97] The poem asks a question about whether Christmas is about happiness, madness, drunkenness or a plan by *Babylon* to make money. They question the freedom associated with Christmas where people are free to do anything they want, including shameful things. Instead of bringing joy, it brings suffering and the killing of innocent animals.[98] For the Ratafarians of the *House of Fire,* Christmas brings sadness, hatred and mercilessness instead of love and happiness. Their views regarding Christmas shows flexibility and the abiltiy to critique increasing commodification, Rastafarians reject both the old order based on slavery and colonialism, and the new one based on capitalism. They certainly have their own perceptions of current affairs. With regard to the old order, they liken the oppression of blacks by whites during slavery to the enslavement of the Israelites by the Egyptians, and equate their conditions with that of the Israelites in *Babylon*. Like the Israelites, they see themselves as the 'chosen ones'. Thus, in interpreting their history and that of the world, they see it as the history of oppressive eras, starting from ancient times continuing to our modern times. For them, the new world order as propagated and maintained by the United States of America and Britain, with the

Pope in control is the continuation of the Babylonian and Egyptian slave systems (*Observation*, 27th December 2003). Wiseprophet maintains:

> Evil will not act himself but will give power to someone. Queen Elizabeth uses Tony Blair and George Bush because America is still under Britain. The war between the West and the Arabs is not for oil, as many people believe but a religious war because the Arabs do not want to take orders from a woman (Queen Elizabeth) (*Ibid*).

Within the *House of Fire*, the Church, big companies such as Anglo-American and De Beers, as well as political leaders are the true representatives of *Babylon*. The poem compiled by Kingman has this to say about the Pope:

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[97] Appendix C2 pp 223-224.

[98] This should be understood from the background that Rastafarians are not supposed to slaughter animals or eat meat.

> Pope John Paul in his throne proclaiming de mark
> Corruption, illusion, pollution and confusion are de habitants of his throne
> A throne with no dignity, the man whom sits upon has no solutions
> Well, King Selassie I is de Most High Priest.[99]

This poem depicts the Pope's throne as a proclamation of Satanism, the mark or the number (triple six) of the beast.[100] For them, organised Christianity is responsible for promoting bad things and creating problems such as corruption, illusion, pollution and confusion.

Explaining the views of Rastafarians with regard to the economic dispensation, *Jah Powe*r has this to say about big capitalists:

> Like before 1994, eighty percent of the wealth of the country is still owned by Oppenheimer while the entire South African population is left to share the remaining twenty percent. Politicians, whether in the old or new dispensation are planners of religion, which they use to control people, control banking, and build prisons. All these must surely come to an end (*Interview*, *Jah Power*, 07th January 2003).

The domination and power that Babylon enjoyed and continues to enjoy is derived from organised Christianity which in turn derives its power from Christians around the world. Explaining how and when *Babylon* will fall, Jah Power says:

> The fall of *Babylon* will come when people withdraw their support for organised Christianity. The fall of Christianity will signal the fall of the government of men and the doom of Anti-Christ will be sealed (*Ibid*). [101]

A significant point is that Rastafarians propose an alternate form of government after the destruction of *Babylon* by proclaiming that:

> After its fall, the government of men (present governments) will be replaced by the theocracy government, which is a Divine government that shall rule Creation in Love, Purity, Holiness and Unity with all the ingredients of Affection, Compassion and Humility. The structure of the government is Selassie I. The column, the main column is Love, Purity, and Holiness (*I Interview*, *Jah Power*, 07th January 2003).
> .

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[99] Appendix C2.
[100] That is why *Babylon* is sometimes called the anti-Christ.
[101] The word anti-Christ is sometimes used to refer to evil people.

Democracy as described in Appendix A, is blamed for most of society's problems — hence the argument for its replacement by a theocratic form of government as proposed by Sister Queen Fire.[102] Indeed, Rastafarians of Daveyton make wide-ranging critique of contemporary capitalism and international relations. They have opinions about politics in South Africa, which include a rather singular critique of Mandela. Nelson Mandela as the first president of the new South Africa is criticised in a popular poem entitled *Mandela of the Old Times.*[103] The poem explains how Mandela changed from a freedom fighter and became like any other politician. According to this poem, Mandela today is a different person from the man who went to prison. Before he went to prison, he thought and acted like a soldier. When he came out he started to think and act like all other politicians. He started to pass laws legalising abortion and contraceptives. The poem argues that when he came out of prison he was programmed, which can be seen by the way he dances, talks, walks and laughs. Before he went to prison he had a beard, he shaved it when he came out.[104]

The destruction of Babylon does not imply physically fighting against oppression but mentally and psychologically moving out of it in deeds since Rastafarians' believe in non-violence. In seeking a non-violent resolution to its objection to *downpression,* the weapon of choice is the spoken word. *Wordsoundpower or Word, Sound and Power* believed to bring personal and collective overcoming. It often takes the form of chanting verses from the Bible and singing songs calling for the destruction of Babylon (Gondwe, 2002: 10). The *chanting down of Babylon* through the Nyabhinghi dance, smoking of *ganja*, and the beating of drums are performed as rituals meant to drive *Babylon* away.

Not only are Rastafarians against 'politics', they reject all forms of the present governments because they claim that they all follow Babylon and therefore that they are *Babylon.* This line of belief is best described as follows:

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[102] Appendix A,
[103] This poem also appears in the Appendix.
[104] See Appendix C2.

> Only a Theocratic Government could represent Ian'I within these times. When the folly of great Babylon (world isms) is at its peak, all governments of the world are drunk with the wine of her fornication because every form of government take unto laws of Babylon, whether they be Monarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy, Republic or socialist (*Jahug*, 1992: 16).

After its destruction, the Babylonian order will be replaced by a new form of government based on Rastafarianism. As Jah Youth argues, the solutions to problems that Babylon creates are found in the Theocracy Reign or Government where humankind will live according to the laws of H.I.M (His Imperial Majesty/Haile Selassie) (*Interview*, *Jah Youth*, 21st January 2003). This can be seen as the political aim in their movement from Babylon to Zion.[105] In this way, Rastafarianism becomes a journey, a movement from Babylon to Zion. Rastafarians thus reject the idea of going to heaven after death because their heaven (Zion) is here on earth. The destruction of Babylon or getting to Zion, they agree, is not an easy thing to achieve. They always remind each other of this and encourage each other to be prepared to endure long-suffering and to have patience (*Observation*, 27th December 2003).

## 8.4 Rastafarianism and the Community

As has been seen, Rastafarians are against most of the things that the broad-spectrum of people do and believe in. It also became clear in the course of this research that this rejection does not imply that they exclude themselves from civil society or work against it. In fact, in this sense they see themselves as part of society, working with it, hoping that it can be transformed eventually when people see the light; refraining from doing crime, violence or evil, and eventually doing good things. On the other hand, members of society have conflicting opinions about the Movement, a situation that is aptly described by Gondwe:

> Rastafari has always presented a challenge to the world. Negative, positive or neutral, practically everybody has an opinion on it, whether or not they can back their theses with factual evidence. The consequences of this have been outright

[105] This movement is very important for them. It is known as exodus, taken from book in the Bible it is interpreted as meaning the movement of *Jah* people and it was initially associated with repatriation to Africa.

> dismissal, mockery, resentment, misunderstanding and even abuse. Rastafari have often been portrayed in the media as crazy, fanatical blacks with a drug problem and described by various derogatory terms such as a bizarre cult suspected of violent crimes which stands in direct contrast to their calling of peace, love and *inity* (unity) (2002: 9).

When applying this quote to the South African situation, the way the Movement has been perceived seems to have changed over time. The first part of the quote that views Rastafarians negatively seem to be applicable to the period before 1994 when the government considered them terrorists, and the media did not even cover their activities. The quote also highlights the good things that some people see Rastafarianism representing and the positive side of Rastafarianism, which became more pronounced after 1994 when dreadlocks became fashionable, and when most black people started to search for new identities.

Another reason the Movement became popular after 1994 is that although it does not see eye-to-eye with the government they both strive for common objectives, such as peace, love, unity, and a drug and crime free society. These are the problems experienced by the community, which is why some people think that Rastafarianism offers the solution. One Rastafarian said:

> In these days the society tends to be appreciative of *I n I* and it starting to *over* what we are about and what our mission in *iration* is. As for *de I*, I never thought I will become Rastafarian when I grow up because society made me to think that Rastafarians did not wash their locks and were dirty people. That is the reason why I don't blame any member of the society but the system (brainwash) which made them to lose their African culture (*Interview*, *Monty*, 04th January 2004).

The contrasting attitudes that respondents hold towards Rastafarians is reflected in the answers they gave in the questionnaire. Most respondents, ninety-two percent as opposed to eight percent, feel that Rastafarians should be allowed to practise their religion freely. One respondent even went to the extent of saying that "If Christianity, Hinduism and Islam are allowed to be practised, Rastafarians should be given equal treatment if their practices don't conflict with the constitution of the country."[106](see Appendix?) While most respondents feel that Rastafarianism should be practised freely, the same cannot be said about

[106] Questionnaire.

their opinion on the government's recognition of the Movement. Sixty percent of the respondents of the representative sample are of the opinion that the government should recognise the Movement and that it should be allowed to register with the South Africa Council of Churches (SACC) as a religious movement as opposed to forty percent that feel that they should not be recognised. This suggests that a large proportion of people in Daveyton feel that Rastafarians should be able to follow their religion freely, be recognised by the government, and be registered with the SACC.

The above position does not imply that society agrees or supports everything that Rastafarians do. While most people agree that Rastafarianism should be recognised and Rastafarians be allowed to practise their religion freely, most of those interviewed, about sixty four percent as against thirty six percent, feel that they should not be allowed to smoke marijuana freely.[107] This is not surprising given that more than eighty of respondents said that the smoking of marijuana gives the Rastafarians a bad name. One respondent maintained: "My feeling as a student is that the Movement should not be allowed to exist because the rate of learners who smoke dagga is very high."[108]

On the other hand, irrespective of their attitude towards the Movement, most respondents feel that there are good qualities that members of society can learn from Rastafarians. These are respect, hard work, living an inexpensive life, honesty, peace, love, pride of being an African, respect of nature and the environment, and not being ashamed to follow their culture and practise their beliefs. Even those who confess to not having any knowledge about the Movement indicated that some of these qualities describe Rastafarians. Seventy percent feel that Rastafarians should be allowed to practise and work in professions, such as law and teaching. Twenty-one percent feel that they should not be allowed access to these professions (with some giving as a reason the

[107] It must be indicated that most of those who say that the smoking of marijuana should not be allowed are not against the actual smoking but where it is smoked. They argue that if they are allowed to smoke it should not be in public or in front young boys who may be tempted to smoke too.
[108] Questionnaire.

smoking of marijuana). The remaining nine percent is not sure whether they should be allowed access or not.

The results of the questionnaire suggest that Rastafarians seem to have managed to forge a strong identity. They have become clearly distinguishable from other members of society. Their dreadlocks, smoking marijuana, outfit, reggae music and language are singled-out as their most outstanding external features. However, respondents were able to identify Rastafarians by some of the virtues they subscribe to, such as love, respect, peace and honesty.

Forty percent indicated that they are aware that Rastafarians have their own church, although it should be noted that there seems to be confusion as to what a Rastafarian church is. Most respondents tend to associate their church with the dance, and think that dancing is the way they worship. This means that there is still a lack of knowledge of Rastafarianism as an organised religious Movement with a church and priests. All respondents indicated that they are familiar with reggae music and are aware that they have their own language. Sixty percent are in contact with Rastafarians on a daily basis as friends, neighbours, at school or at work. The remaining forty percent sometimes see them in dances or in the street.

A controversial issue about Rastafarianism is the question of whether students at school should be allowed to wear dreadlocks or not. Forty-seven think that students should not be allowed to wear dreadlocks because these look untidy and that some of the wearers do not even bother to wash them. Some said that if they can keep them clean they would not have a problem. The other fifty three percent feel that Rastafarians should be allowed to wear them. Most of the respondents argue that it is their democratic right to wear the hairstyle of their choice. One respondent even says that the school is the right place where dreadlocks should be allowed, "so as to promote the culture of tolerance towards other religions – also because the school is the place where people acquire knowledge; it is important that they are exposed to different cultures." Some argue from a legal viewpoint that wearing dreadlocks as a cultural and religious symbol is in line with the

country's constitution, which promotes multiculturalism and freedom of worship. Some responses therefore show acceptance of state ideologies around multiculturalism, cultural tolerance and respect for the constitution, and apply these ideologies to the case of Rastafarianism. Their responses confirmed that Rastafarians have conveyed a strong impression of their cultural and religious identity.

It is clear that respondents hold conflicting ideas about Rastafarianism. While some people reject the Movement outright, others reject some of the things they do while not having any problem with the Movement itself. In this connection, one respondent commenting on how the Movement can benefit society observes:

> Rastafarians do respect others and have peace in their lives but they should not encourage young people to smoke dagga. They don't believe in killing. My general feeling is that I think they are good in everything except for smoking dagga all over. I think dagga should be puffed only at dances and in their private places whereby cannot see them. Mostly I think they are a peaceful society. People can learn to take care of their women because they adore and respect their women.[109]

Although Rastafarianism is seen as a big Movement that will stay forever because of the impact that its music has on society, some feel that it is behind the times evident from the comment of this respondent:

> Most Rastafarians are still trapped in the primitive slave era. They lack business initiatives to empower their patrons/members. They don't have a broad-based skill or educational forum. They should create educational, social and economic structures and this will broaden their role in society. The government should assist the Movement to make it economical, socially and politically correct in terms of what is current (*Ibid*).

[109] Comment from the Questionnaire.

## 8.5 Conclusion

Rastafarians in Daveyton have managed to create a view of the world, which, though borrowing from another movement, differs in many respects from that held by civil society. Their life philosophy, as has been demonstrated, encompasses all aspects of their existence. They have their own distinct and individual religious views, which borrow heavily from Christianity and Judaism. What differentiates Rastafarianism from the Christian faith is their understanding of creation, life and the afterlife. The two also differ on the question of the trinity and such questions as who is Christ. While Rastafarians of the *House of Fire* attempt to extract aspects of Christianity not tainted by colonial contexts, they see organised mainstream Christianity in the thrall of capitalism or controlling capitalism – a radical critique of contemporary society and power — which is influenced by their political philosophy. This is based mainly on the ideology of Pan Africanism as propagated by Marcus Garvey.

With regard to the South African situation, as we have seen, their philosophy of life is shaped by prevailing conditions, in Daveyton and the world. They reject the existing political, social, economic, religious and cultural norms as oppressive, describing them as part of *Babylon's* creation. The destruction of *Babylon, chanting down Babylon* would bring the end of oppression. The poems recited are an expression of their point of view of the contemporary South African situation. The poem about Mandela, for example, demonstrates their rejection of the contemporary situation — extended unusually to the untouchable figure of Mandela.

The responses to the questionnaire suggest that members of the local community are divided yet remarkably tolerant, and appreciative of the cultural and religious aspects of Rastafarianism despite being ignorant and confused due to the lack of knowledge. What is obvious is the negative (the smoking of *ganja*) and positive aspects (such as the dance and reggae music) that the respondents highlighted. The major problem as underlined above is due to be the local community's lack of knowledge.

# CHAPTER NINE

## Conclusion

This thesis has argued that Rastafarianism seems to be a growing phenomenon in the South African social, religious and cultural spheres. Its emergence is the result of the youth's desire to forge a new culture and identity that reflects its rejection, not only of society's norm but also the world order, which is based on the oppression of the weak by the strong. This cultural identity emerged out of particular social, economic, political, cultural and religious conditions of inequalities originally created by the apartheid system pertinent to Daveyton. It emerged from a combination of several factors, namely the youths' rejection of their parents' religious convictions and conditions of deprivation and marginalisation following 1994.

Conditions in Daveyton remained deplorable in spite of the National Party government's intention to improve them in comparison to any township in South Africa. Lack of housing, unemployment, inefficient provision of infrastructure and educational facilities over the years created conditions favourable for the growth of Rastafarianism among the youth. The new political dispensation has done little to appease Rastafarians; indeed, it resulted in further consolidating their opposition to the political system. The fact that Rastafarianism formally originated in the new informal settlement or in the old location (for instance the *houses* in Thembisa and Vosloorus) attests to the discontent specifically associated with conditions there.

When first introduced, Rastafarianism found acceptance amongst the youth who were searching for a new cultural identity and had other common life experiences and expectations. The thesis has shown that the emergence and development of Rastafarianism in Daveyton followed the same path as other social, religious and

cultural movements. Like such movements, it came into being as a reaction to prevailing conditions; like religious groups, it developed into different denominations.

The most important achievement of Rastafarians of Daveyton is their ability to develop a unique identity. This identity, as the thesis has argued, is a combination of general or international Rastafarian characteristics and features that came into existence as a response to local conditions. Those that are general include *i-tal livity, iry talk,* dreadlocks, their colours, *ganja* use, music and sanctification. Other components of their identity that emerged because of their attempt to cope with local challenges include ritual, burial, e*arthday* and marriage celebrations. An important point to note is that some of what constitutes Rastafarian identity (such as dress code, dreadlocks and language) have either been adopted and used by other members of society or have been commercialised. The style of greeting and *irytalk*, for example, has become popular within the general youth populace. Dreadlocks have become so fashionable that they are commercialised in hair salons. Items and cloths bearing the colours of Marcus Garvey are bought and worn by many other people who are not Rastafarians. It appears that the adoption and commercialisation of the Rastafarian style and garb contributes in making society tolerant to some of their symbolism and to Rastafarianism *per se*.

The Rastafarians of Daveyton also have a common worldview despite denominational splits. The common point of view of the world is reflected in the attitude they have on the controversial issues of abortion, prostitution and homosexuality. The legalisation of abortion and homosexual marriages is evidence that Babylon is still triumphant. Their worldview is complex, as has been detailed, because it arises from many sources. What further complicates it is the open-endedness of their religion. This complexity makes it difficult for members of society to understand Rastafarianism. Yet, whatever Rastafarians do is directed towards one goal, namely the *chanting down of Babylon*. Their philosophy of life is shaped by a number of factors that include information from

a number of readings, prevailing conditions, life experiences, and their desire to change the *status quo*.

## 9.1 Rastafarianism as a way of life

The Rastafarian way of life differs greatly from that of the general society. In some ways, it sets itself up as an antithesis of society's social and spiritual way of life. Although they share similar objectives with everybody concerning problems confronting society, such as drugs, Rastafarians nevertheless use *ganja,* which is classified as an illegal drug. They reject other religious movements such as mainstream Christianity, Indigenous African Religion and Independent African Churches.

Yet, like Christianity, which draws its strength from the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt and Babylon, Rastafarianism owes its origin to the suffering of African slaves in the Americas similar to the Independent African Churches that emerged as a response to political oppression and sought to liberate blacks from white domination. An example of the Independent African Churches was the formation of the independent African Methodist church when in 1892 a group of black Methodists withdrew from the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary and called their movement the Ethiopian Church, after the prophecy of African redemption in Psalms 68 (Campbell, 1994:103). Rastafarianism seeks political justice for blacks by taking a form of liberation theology in addition to its Pan African ideology. Rastafarianism may be seen as a form of a political theology ('theocracy reign' in Rastafarian language). This points to the difficulty of classifying Rastafarianism as a movement. What we have seen throughout is that Rastafarianism defies rigid classification because is neither quite a millenarian movement nor an independent African church.

Rastafarianism differs in a number of ways with other known religious movements found in Daveyton. It idealises Africa and its orientation towards Africa is a central tenet of the faith. Most religious movements in Daveyton focus

mainly on the spiritual aspect of human existence and have nothing to do with the racial, political and social experiences of their adherents (*Observation*, 04th January 2003). Rastafarian preaching and proselytising requires someone with an understanding of these conditions because, not only does one have to preach but also answer questions that may arise from the congregation, which is not the case with other religious movements.

In addition, unlike in Indigenous African Religion where the use of traditional medicine is central; and amongst most Independent African Churches who believe in the healing power of water, Rastafarians believe in the healing power of herbal medicine, hence their establishment of the herbal committee. Thus for any Rastafarian to serve or perfom a specific task, specialist knowledge is required.

When applying the definition of the concept of culture and subculture to Rastafarianism, it qualifies in both cases. Van der Walt (1997) identified five basic components of culture as worldview, social, material, behavioural and religious aspects. As has been demonstrated, Rastafarians have their own interpretation of the world. While Rastafarianism may be seen as a political, social or religious movement, in the senses alluded to above, it does not align itself with any such movement. This is because the Rastafarian worldview embraces all these aspects, and at the same time, tends to represent an antithesis of what other mainstream movements stand for.

Concerning the social components, Rastafarians have managed to coin their own language (*iry talk),* have their own institutions and laws, and have an understanding of their responsibility to the community at large. On the material side, it may be observed that while they do use modern tools and machines, they prefer, as in the construction of their tabernacle, to use natural *materiala*. The behavioural dimension of Rastafarianism is mainly based on the idea of *i-tal livity,* which is its cornerstone. It also entails unique habits and customs, such as the peculiar Rastafarian way of performing rituals and celebrating special occasions described in preceding chapters. The religious component (which van der Walt

claims to be the deepest core of culture) is also the most important to Rastafarians of Daveyton (van der Walt, 1997:9). Their belief in Africa as *Zion* and Selassie as *Jah* is central to Rastafarians of Daveyton. The importance of religion is evident in the importance that the *House of Fire* places on the process of *grounation,* with its emphasis on reflection and clarification of doctrinal issues.

Rastafarianism could be described as a subculture in that it emerged as a result of a group of people coming together to share common interests and tastes, people who like reggae music, smoke *ganja,* and who are not happy with the present status quo, or wish in some way to challenge it. The people I have identified in this study share a common background of deprivation, and are interested in seeing a change in the *status quo.* They have as a result, adopted a common identity and practices that consciously separate them from the mainstream culture. However, as in the case of other subcultures, Rastafarianism is becoming incorporated into the mainstream culture. Its colours, signs and objects have been commercialised and mass-produced.[110] Although the state in the form of the police and judiciary and other religious formations still regards Rastafarians as deviant, the media has done much in educating the public and so has promoted understanding and acceptance.[111]

In the process of identity construction in the new South Africa, it might be argued that an important lesson can be learned from Rastafarians. The ideas propagated by the state of a 'Rainbow Nation'; nation building; cultural diversity and/or multiculturalism are signs of the lack of a cohesive identity and a common culture that is accepted by all. The Rastafarians of Daveyton, it might be argued, have managed to devise a common cultural identity that is rooted in Ancient Israel, *Ithiopia*, slavery, colonialism, the ideology of Pan Africanism and resistance to apartheid.

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[110] This is the manufacture and selling of Rastafarian items such beads, T-shirts, caps, stickers and other items with Rastafarian colours or *ganja* signs.

[111] Another example of this is a short TV film called *One Love, which* is a story of love story of Rastafarian man and a Christian woman who could not marry because of religious differences. The story is about religious tolerance and it shows that Rastafarianism is slowly being recognised as religion.

The process of identity formation amongst Rastafarians of Daveyton takes place through a number of stages. The would-be convert will start by showing some interest in reggae music, grow dreadlocks or smoke *ganja*. He/she will then drift towards people with similar interests. The next stage in the process will be to attend gatherings especially *grounation*. The process is completed with registration and most importantly the adoption of a Rastafarian lifestyle.

## 9.2 Its Persistence and "Place under the Sun"[112]

Rastafarianism is growing and gaining importance in South Africa. Its impact, according to Gondwe, "[is] by all accounts, … a way of life that will continue to have a place on planet earth, whether in its pure form or in hippie versions for the consumption of those who find the undiluted truth just a tad unpalatable," (Gondwe, 1992:14).

The persistence of Rastafarianism can be explained in terms of its nature as a Movement that is always repositioning and refashioning itself, and its focus on contemporary issues and their changing manifestations. An example is that any legislation or a new lifestyle (law legalising abortion or homosexuality) that is considered part of *Babylon* is challenged, and can be used to attract sympathy from anyone who shares the same conviction. Moreover, the fact that different Rastafarians interpret Rastafarianism in different ways leaves room for innovation and coexistence with the main belief systems.

Outlining the endurance of Rastafarianism as a Movement, Kebede *et al* give these reasons: Firstly, it is an old movement dating back to the 1930's and from there it has not only persisted, but has also become globalised while many social movements have come and gone. Secondly, its stance is radical, offering a drastic reinterpretation of the social and economic conditions of the world. Thirdly, it is a religious and political movement that is seen as a threat to the established order (Kebede, *et al.,* 2006:2). Rastafarianism thus serves as a home for like-minded

[112] Witvlei, 1985.

people who feel alienated or oppressed by the dominant social and economic conditions across a large number of possible divides.

There are various reasons Rastafarianism will continue to persist as an important social organisation:

- The adoption of some of the symbols of the Movement, such as dreadlocks and Rastafarian colours for commercial reasons tend to promote it. Rastafarianism as a way of life is gaining acceptance, something that Rastafarians can exploit in promoting their Movement.

- The fact that the Movement is generally accepted, especially by the youth makes it an important youth sub-cultural organisation.

- Since the demise of apartheid, media coverage has contributed to some understanding of the Movement by members of society.

- The involvement of Rastafarians in projects aimed at uplifting society, their role in trying to address problems facing society, and their involvement with other religious movements in mass prayers show that the Movement is gaining recognition.

- Their part in celebrations of the African History Month also makes them part of the broader family of African nationalists.

- Their position on problems such as crime and drugs, which they share with many people, the government and other organisations, helps in giving the Movement a positive image.

- With more high school and university students becoming interested, the Movement is moving away from being classified as one belonging to school dropouts.

However, there are constraints on the growth of Rastafarianism, particularly because it has no clear programme or practical manifesto outlining how their aims will be realised.

- The major problem facing Rastafarians is their use of *ganja* for sacramental reasons. Due to smoking of *ganja,* the government is reluctant to recognise them. In addition, it is for this reason that many people dislike the Movement.

- Except for the *House of Fire*, there is a lack of structured organisation, making it impossible to share information or forge a group identity, and thereby curtailing its development.

- Lack of, or loose organisation without regulatory mechanisms may result in some people doing things that are not appreciated by society and claiming that they are Rastafarians.

- Rastafarians still have to convince society about how they will control *ganja* if they are allowed to smoke freely and prevent its abuse by children and criminals.

- A serious problem facing Rastafarians is the lack of change in their organisation regarding the position of women. This is in spite of Sister Queen Fire's comments that the period of 1994 brought with it some liberation among Rasta women.[113] Although they are referred to as *queens,* women still occupy a subordinate position.[114] Women are discriminated against in many ways. For example, they are not allowed to preach, play drums, and attend the *binghi* during certain times; and they must always

[113] Appendix A,
[114] This is however not a problem that is prevalent in other religious denominations. There is still disagreement in some Christian churches as to whether women can practise as priests or not.

cover their hair and wear clothes that cover their knees.[115] This may account for the insufficient number of women in the Movement.

In spite of these problems which the Movement still has to grapple with, Rastafarianism seems to be becoming an important social and religious force in Daveyton, as is the case in other townships of South Africa and internationally. For the *House of Fire*, for example, from its inception in 1997 with only two members, the number has grown to about fifty members by 2002 (*Observation*, 16th February 2002). The number of Rastafarians attending dances can be estimated at about 200 (*Observation, 08 March 2002*). The significance of Rastafarianism is that it is one of the movements that have chosen to use past memories of black oppression (instead of suppressing those memories) to fight contemporary battles. Furthermore, it is the only international movement for black Africans that has been around for a long-time and is still growing in popularity (Kebede, *et al.,* 2006: 2).

[115] What may be interpreted as discrimination by society may be seen as normal by Rastafarian women.

# APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Biographical Information

The biographical information was mostly obtained through person-to-person interview with informants. This is with the exception of Jah Power who was comfortable writing his life history. Whether in a form of a written account or interviews, information extracted from the original transcripts has been summarised by the author of this thesis. Original transcripts of the interview and written submissions are (together with other original documents) in the William Cullen Library at the University of the Witwatersrand.

**Moratehi 'Jah Youth' Mofokeng** (21 January 2003)

Moratehi 'Jah Youth' Ishmael Mofekeng is the first-born child of Naledi Johannes Mofokeng and Malifu Christine. He was born in 1977 in Qwaqwa. He started his primary school in Dibe Primary School and continued schooling until Standard 8. He had a difficult upbringing. His parents separated in 1983 and he grew-up under the care of his grandmother. His father had a drinking problem and had little time for family. Family problems forced him to flee home; he followed his mother to Soshanguve (Pretoria) on the 16 June 1991 and returned to Qwaqwa after eight years. "I cannot say life in Pretoria was easy, but when comparing it with that in Qwaqwa maybe it was". In Shoshanguve, he joined the Salvation Army and through their donations, he was able to live. He also managed to continue with school and did his Standard 9 in Reitumetse Secondary School. Things started to turn bad when his mother lost her work and they consequently had to move to Daveyton where they stayed in Emaphupheni until to date. Life was very difficult. "My mother got a man and we stayed with

him". Using money he earned doing piece-jobs, he went back to school and did his matric in 1991 and to pass only four subjects. "By this time, I was already a Rasta, and there were only two of us in the entire school — myself and Ras Mthandeni who is still a Rasta. The only time I had a problem with my dreadlocks was when my teacher took me outside my class and showed me a well-trimmed garden and a bush and asked which I think was beautiful. My answer was that I liked the bush because it was natural. My teacher said he was not going to punish me because he was satisfied with my answer." 'Jah Youth' represented his school in academic competitions and in AIDS awareness projects in which four students were selected from the entire school.

'Jah Youth' was introduced to reggae music back in Qwaqwa where his father's brother, who was a soldier, used to buy some reggae cassettes. Listening to these served as an early inspiration. From his arrival in Emaphupheni, it took him only about three weeks to convert into Rastafari. "I became a Rasta after a time of soul-searching when I looked back in life and try to figure-out what I wanted to become in the future". What motivated him more than anything else was the desire not to be like his father, an alcoholic. Thus, becoming a Rasta would prevent him from drinking liquor. Reggae music continued to influence him, especially the albums *suffering* by Don Carlos and *Traffic Jam* by Eric Donaldson. In Emaphupheni, 'Jah Youth' used to stay next-door with another Rasta, although he had a problem with him because he ate fish, and according to information he had, Rastas were not supposed to eat fish.

'Jah Power', his cousin, played a main role in introducing 'Jah Youth' to the world of Rastafari. He used to while-away time at his *corner* sharing *ganja,* ideas and teachings. It was at this corner that he was introduced to the majority of Rastas. During those early years, Rastafarianism as a movement was very different from what it is now. It was a dance hall type of Rastafarianism as opposed to the *binghi* of today. The first dance he attended took place at Binghi Bunny's place where mostly elders who were dancing together in *inity* attended.

There were DJ's with microphones and reggae music the whole time. The meal cooked was rice and vegetables without salt. It was then that he decided to quit eating *flash* and processed foodstuff.

'Jah Youth' stays with a *sistren* whom she met after she had problems at home. They are blessed with a daughter called Ashantiwa, an Amharic word for unity of mothers to fight against colonialism and oppression. "Ashantiwa is one year old this year and we never cut her hair since she was born." She never takes processed milk but only breastfed, fruits and 100% juice because only fruits and vegetables are eaten in their house.

Their parents approved their relationship; there was no *lobola* paid and no formal marriage took place. His in-laws do not have a problem with their daughter staying with a Rasta because according to him, "they became aware that I was living a clean life." He already has his own place to stay but he spent most of his time at his in-laws because that is where he operates his small business, selling small items like cigarettes, sweets and peanuts. He is not against working for a boss if it will raise money to expand his business.

For 'Jah Youth' the democratic changes of 1994 brought very little positives, but mostly negatives. "The only positive change is that we can now sit in parks and enjoy fresh air, something we could not enjoy before. However, unlike before, abortion and prostitution are legalised which means that there was greater respect for human life then than now. Before the end of apartheid, black people were united and the youth were known to be leaders but now they are victims of unemployment, crime and age restriction at school. The government continues to play tricks with people by telling us that all languages are equal, which is not true."

**Kingman Letsie** (15 January 2003)

Kingman Mpopo Letsie (formerly Christopher) — changed his names after coming to South Africa and obtaining a new ID. He is the first-born child of Sempe and Mankau Mosemake. He was born on 12th June 1968 in the Leribe district of Lesotho, and attended his primary school in Dinosing. After Standard 5, which he passed with a distinction, there was no high school to attend so he studied Standard 5 again, which he passed once more with a distinction. He then did some piece jobs working at his teacher's shop for R50.00 a week. He attended school until Standard 7 and dropped out in July 1987.

The same year after dropping out of school, he went to South Africa to look for employment. He came to Daveyton where he stayed with his mother who was renting a place for R45.00 per month. He did not have an identity document then and only managed to obtain one in 2001. His first job was with a construction company where he worked for two weeks and earned R50.00 a week. "I was still young and owing to my physical strength, I could not carry out some of the heavy jobs. In September of the same year, I found a job with the Benoni Country Club where I earned R28.00 a week." He worked for the company until February 2002. His earnings were sometimes used to pay rent. Life was difficult in Daveyton since out of the family of six, he was the only one working.

Kingman has been living with a woman since 1988 who is from Lesotho. They met in South Africa while she was visiting. They are blessed with one son and a daughter. In February 2001, he moved out from his mother's place to his own.

His first introduction to Rastafari was through reggae music. In 1992, his father bought a cassette by Peter Tosh entitled *Wanted Dread and Alive*. To Kingman, his conversion to Rastafari became a fulfilment of a prophecy by his father who once told him that "when you grow up find Rastafari and never let him go". His father also said that he was going to be a priest, which he is today. In Lesotho, he lived a Christian life as a baptised Anglican. He was also inspired by DJ Sello Thulo of

Radio Lesotho in the reggae programme that used to play between 7:00am to 7:30am. This began to teach him more about Rastafari through reggae music being played and explained.

His real conversion took place once he arrived in Daveyton. As soon as he started work, it became easy for him to buy some cassettes. In 1997, he started to wear deadlocks and associate with other Rastas. The first Rasta he met was Papa Mokete who played a cassette by Rufaro entitled *Stop Fighting*. He liked it, stole money to buy it from his mother's Christmas savings and instead of going to work, played it the whole day. However, he had a problem with Papa Mokete because he worked in butchery. The first dance he attended was at Papa Mokete's home, which started on Friday and ended on Sunday. This was the first time he had seen so many Rastas. The first Rasta who made an impact on Kingman was Jah Power whom he met at his corner. He was the one who taught him that *ganja* should not be mixed with a cigarette and that it should not be rolled with a newspaper.

**Sipho'Yellowman' Mnisi** (09 January 2003)

Sipho Gift 'Yellowman' was born on 01 June 1970 in Daveyton. His parents separated when he was two months old. In 1976, he went to Swaziland to live with his granny. In 1980, he returned with her to Daveyton. His granny passed away in 1982. Life became difficult because she was the one who was taking care of him. He started school in 1980 at Kuzimisela Primary School. "In the house where I lived there was nobody to care for me. I used to live from one place to another until a woman next-door adopted me." He stayed with this woman until he dropped out of school in Standard 9 at Lesiba Senior Secondary School. The reason for quitting school was that he impregnated his girlfriend and had sought employment in order to support her and the baby.

Yellowman started work with Propack Merchandising, which was contracted by Hyperama in 1993. He was employed on a temporary basis, working night shifts.

Shift-workers were paid R750.00 per fourth night with R100.00 bonus if they worked for the whole month. Yellowman worked for two years until the contract between the company and shop expired. He then worked for DMS, a merchandising company. He worked 26 days and was paid R1700.00 excluding overtime. After the two contract employments, he got a casual job as a merchandiser with Hyperama doing night duties, where he worked for one year. From Benoni he got employment with Moonlight Merchandising in the Edenvale Hyperama where he worked for 18 months. He also worked for the merchandising company called 3D for 14 months. The last company he worked for was Tiger Brands Merchandising from March to September 2002. Yellowman is no longer thinking of slaving for a master; he is thinking of self-employment by making artworks.

Yellowman started by wearing deadlocks in 1995 before he became a Rastaman. From then he started to consider himself a Rasta, although he used to smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol. He started smoking *ganja* at the age of 13 years. He stopped smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol in 1996 when he converted into Rastafari. At Daveyton, he and his girlfriend first moved and settled in Barcelona and in February 2002, he bought the site with a shack for R5000.00 where he lives today with a certain woman. By this time, he was attending the *binghi*. Staying in Emaphupheni made it possible to convert fully into a Rastafari because he lived close to the *binghi.*

Yellowman met his *queen* in 1993 and they have been working for the same companies ever since. They have three children, a girl and two boys. He stays with one of the boys and the others are with their mother. Family problems centre on the question of food and deadlocks. His wife, for instance, does not want him to grow very long deadlocks. With regard to the problem of food, she insists that they should cook one pot, that is, one type of food for the whole family. Yellowman also insists they cook one pot, but of *ital.* As a result, his wife is against the Rastafarianism and decided to go back to her people until he changes his lifestyle. She has given him three months to change, although he is not

prepared to. Instead, he expects her to convert so that like the followers of the Zion Christian Church the entire family will join the church. For him, it would be nice to have a Rasta family. Instead, his wife cannot even attend dances with him, which makes reaching a compromise impossible.

**Tshepiso 'Humbleness' Matlala** (23 September 2003)

Tshepiso 'Humbleness' is the priest of the Boboo Dreads in Daveyton. He was born on 27 May 1981 in Kathorus (Vosloorus). His father works as an operator at Unilever (formerly Lever Brothers) in Boksburg. He was attracted to Rastafari in 1996 when he started locking his hair, visiting other Rastafarians and playing reggae music. Like other preachers, being a Rasta is a calling; he claims to have been visited by a spirit. While still residing in Kathorus, Rastafari was not recognised or even noticed at the school that he attended.

After his mother passed away in 1998, the family moved to Daveyton where things started to change for the better. The school that he attended was very accommodative; the school principal who interviewed him had no problem with him being a Rasta. Maybe the reason for this was that "my school work was always up-to-date and very good and I used to recite poems and for the principal, I was a good example to other students."

Humbleness matriculated in 2000 at Vezukhono Secondary School. He is not employed and does piece jobs as an assistant bricklayer. His most important work, though, is to coordinate dances during which he serves as a selector (DJ), musician, motivational speaker, Priest and poet. Humbleness thinks of himself a self-taught poet.

As a dance coordinator, he was bound to clash with the system (police). During one dance, the police tried to stop the group by confiscating their CD player. The second incident occurred during Easter in 2002 when the police raided their dance, confiscated their flags and instructed them to disperse. During both

incidents, they were able to negotiate their way out and claim that their success was mainly due to the humble and polite way they spoke to the police.

Unlike most Rastafarians, Humbleness does not smoke *ganja*. He wears it as hemp, boils and drinks or eats it (in a form of ganja cake). The blame for social, political and economic conditions in South Africa is placed unequivocally on the government. He identifies crime, unemployment and AIDS as pressing problems, which the government is unable to solve because they had made too many promises that they cannot fulfil. According to Humbleness, politicians are very much aware that some of the problems are very difficult to solve but because they want power, they lie to the people so that they can secure votes. He maintains that there are also problems like the land issue, although the government has its priorities upside-down by thinking that abortion and homosexuality are urgent issues that need redress. The solution to these problems is that Rastafarians become involved by working as a non-governmental organisation. Concerning AIDS, he believes that no sex before marriage and abstinence are the only solutions. Unlike other Rastafarians who are against the use of condoms, his opinion is that he cannot crush someone by promoting the use of condoms without coming to an alternative solution. However, he prefers not to be drawn into this controversy.

**Danny 'Wiseprophet' Mokoka** (23 October 2003)

Danny 'Wiseprophet' was born on 24 March 1980 in Daveyton. For the greater part of his life, he has lived in Daveyton with his father and a younger brother who is also a Rasta. Their mother and father divorced during the early 1990s and they lived for some years without any contact with their mother. His father prevented them from seeing her. He is unemployed and treated the children badly when drunk, and they ended up reporting him to social workers. With the help of his aunt, he was able to locate his mother who stayed in Kwa-Thema where she worked as a cleaner at a school. She lived with another man and together. With

his younger brother, they used to visit her until they decided to live with her. Since he knew that his father would not allow them live with their mother, they simply left home. They still visited their father even thought they live with their mother. "When she broke-up with the man she lived with we moved to Inter-land (in Kwa–Thema) where we were renting a house. Life during these days was very difficult." Wiseprophet used to take drugs, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, and come home late at night. In changing this kind of life, he is grateful to his mother whom he claims was always patient with him. He lived in Inter-land until his mother passed away in 2003. He did his Secondary education at Daveyton Secondary School and dropped-out in Standard 9. He was not a Rastafarian during his school days.

After his mother passed away, he and his brother moved to Daveyton where they lived with their father again; their aunt cared for him. Both Wiseprophet and his younger brother are members of the *Nyabhinghi* Order. He was introduced to the Movement while living in Springs where he was influenced by a young man living in the neighbourhood. "I started by smoking *ganja* with him and he told me about Rastafari, played reggae music and read the Bible to me. I could not understand what he talking about because I was still drinking during that time." He became interested in the Movement, which he attributes to the interest he developed in reggae music. He recognises the existence of other Rastafari sects but maintains that they are all one because their differences are nominal.

In Daveyton, he started to attend the *binghi* in 2001. Before that, he used to attend dances. They are members of the Nyabhinghi Order. Wiseprophet is married; he was expecting a baby but it miscarried.

For him, the situation in South Africa is bringing judgement ("the political system is doomed") to both black and white. The system is seen as a continuation of the previous one with no real changes. He does not concern himself with politics since the Movement, as a way of life is non-political, non-partisan and non-religious. He is unemployed and is not prepared to work for *Babylon* because,

according to him, all problems are caused by *Babylon* and one cannot seek a solution from *Babylon.* Solutions to our problems should be sought in Africa and not from Europe. An example of this is the formation of the African Union, which is he claims, is copied from the European Union.

He considers abortion and homosexuality to be anti-Christ. While he sees abortion as murder, gay and lesbians are unholy and they must be "burnt in the lake of fire."' Unlike others, he sees some improvement in the education system form 1994 because blacks are now included in the history curriculum.

**Matshepo "Sister May" Masondo (**17 February 2003)

Matshepo 'Sister May' as she is affectionately known amongst Rastas was born on 05 May 1986 in Daveyton. Both her parents passed away in 1997 and she is presently staying with her uncle. She is a student doing Grade 12 at Rivoni Secondary School and her aim is to go to University to do B com. School is no problem for her. Although she does not attend assembly and is prepared to take punishment for that, she claims to be the only Rasta woman at her school where there are a number of Rastamen. According to her, the education of post apartheid period is not bad.

The problem she experiences is at home where her uncle is against her being a Rasta. The main problem is her smoking of *ganja,* which they claim will affect her studies negatively. Sometimes she is not at home during the night since she attends night vigils. As a Rasta, she does not eat meat, but will go to the shop to buy it if sent. In spite of the problems at home, May claims to be happy as a member of the Rastafarian Movement. She was attracted to it during October 2002; she has been attending the *binghi* since then. She started smoking *ganja,* which she taught herself before she became a Rasta. As a rule amongst Rastas, she does not smoke in front of elders. She was eventually attracted to the Movement by the peaceful way of life of its members.

**Pumla "Queen Fire" Mdluli** 27 February 2002)

Pumla "Queen Fire" was born on 25 March 1983 in Kwa-Thema (Springs). She is a twin in a family of three children with their elder sister working as a teacher in Mpumalanga and the other twin sister still attending college. They also stay with two adopted sisters. Her father worked as a security guard in the offices of the Department of Home Affairs during the apartheid era where she sometimes assisted the police in arresting people who contravened the Pass Laws. Her mother worked in a beer hall until 1983 when the twins were born, but is now disabled with a broken knee.

Sister Queen Fire started her primary school at Muziomsha, after completing her Std 6 (Grade 4) she transferred to Job Maseko Primary School. She did her Matric at Reshogofaletswe Secondary School. While doing Std 9 she became interested in debates, and became chairperson of the Student Representative Council (SRC) in 2000 in her matric year. She sees her involvement in the SRC as a turning point in her life because it equipped her with leadership skills which opened her eyes to many things. As the Chairperson of the SRC, it was not easy for the principal and teachers to openly show their resentment towards her. It was only after her term ended that she was expelled from school. She however returned after negotiations between the principal and her mother. The compromise was that she had to plait her hair instead of wearing dreadlocks. After completing her matric, she went to Boston College. Her initial intention was to do journalism but ended up doing Media Consultancy, obtaining a distinction in Windows 98. Her aim now is to do Public Relations.

Sister Queen Fire was exposed to the Movement when she was ten. Her uncle was a Rasta and she became interested in his lifestyle. In June 1999, she attended her first dance where she met other Rastas. In 2000, she decided to become a Rasta and started to attend a *binghi.* She holds no one responsible for her decision; it was her choice. The only problem at home is her father who is against her being a Rasta. According to her, this could be because of his work with the apartheid regime. Her mother and sisters, however, are not antagonistic towards her. In

fact, they respect her; her elder sister even buys Rastafarian things from her. "There is too much antagonism from the society, maybe because of lack of understanding and as a result, I feel isolated from my peers because I can't identify with them," she laments.

Sister Queen Fire is married to Wiseprophet. They met in Kwa-Thema in 2000 when he used to visit next-door. From the very first time she saw him, she had a vision of them together sitting in a room where he told her that she was one day going to be his Queen. It was on 23 July 2001 that they met and fell in love.

Sister Queen Fire is someone who sees the government to have made some progress since 1994 in the provision of water, housing and bringing political equality between blacks and whites. Her main problem, however, is democracy, which is responsible for social ills such as drugs, prostitution, crime and poverty. Her vision of a government is a theocracy as opposed to democracy. According to her, the period of 1994 brought with it some liberation among Rasta women. Before then, Rastafari was taken to be the Movement of *brethrens,* when women used to rise through men, (if a man is a Rasta he has to encourage his women to become one as well) but now women can rise on their own.

On the position of the Movement in the new political dispensation, she maintains that it should be recognised as a Non-Governmental Organisation by the government and not as a religious movement (that falls under the South African Council of Churches).

**Ephraim 'Jah Power' Mkwanazi** (07 January 2003)

He was born on the 31 May 1975 in Daveyton Ephraim 'Jah Power' Mkhwanazi is the second born child in the family of seven. Coming from a big family, his parents could not afford to provide for them sufficiently; he started doing piece-jobs at the age of eleven to pay for his school fees. He went to school in 1981 at Letsha Primary School at the age of six and continued to Katlego Higher Primary. In 1990, he was expelled from school for political activities. He completed his matric at Caiphus Nyoka Senior Secondary School. His ambition was to study Psychology or Law but his parents could not afford the fees.

"Before I became a Rasta, I was active politically and I also sang in a gospel choir. In 1994, before and after the elections I served in the Marshall Structure with an intention of serving as an MK cadre. I was also inspired by the philosophy to Africanise as espoused by Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe and later joined the Pan African Congress of Azania." However, he decided to quit politics after realising that it was full of tricks.

'Jah Power' sees reggae as responsible for his conversion into the Movement. Elder Bafana introduced him to the music, which introduced him to Rastafari lifestyle. He started to smoke *ganja* before he became a Rasta while he was still singing in the gospel choir.

After matriculation, it was difficult for him to find a job, when he relied on selling fruits and vegetables next to the Harry Gwala Secondary School. While selling, his father found him a job with Iscor on a one-year contract. When it expired, he opened a tuck shop and bought a Chevrolet bakkie. In August 2000, he was shot and robbed in his shop. The second incident was when his second bakkie was stolen at night and was later found stripped. In spite of all these setbacks, 'Jah Power' is determined to continue with his business. He is not prepared to work for a boss as the teachings of Rarastafari encourage one to be self-sufficient. 'Jah Power' sees no absolute solutions to the problems facing the new government.

**Ras Bongani Masuku (**20 April 2003)

Ras Bongani Masuku was born on 15th September 1967 in Daveyton. He started schooling in 1974 at Ukuzimisela Lower Primary School and continued to Higher Primary in 1979. He completed his matric at the Daveyton High School in 1987. He was politically active during his high school days, especially during the student's uprisings of the mid-eighties. During this period of political unrest, Bongani met Rastafari on a day he was hiding from the police when he met two coloured men who were smoking *ganja.* One day he decided to visit their place where they were playing reggae music, and he started to develop some interest in it. Together with friends, they started to research into Jamaica and Rastafari and started to visit other Rastas. The Rastas they visited, however, did not give them a good reception because they ate *flash* (meat) and considered them non-Rasta. Due to this hostility, they started visiting some of them only to borrow reggae cassettes to record. They recorded and wrote down the lyrics of every song. They were first and foremost inspired by Don Carlos's album *Suffering* and then Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Burning Spear's album entitled *Garvey's Ghost.* This changed their attitude towards politics because they started speaking against it by way of seeing Rastafari as a more advanced concept. An album by Black Uhuru changed their lives because of the accessible lyrics, from which they learned the Rasta language.

Bongani became a Rasta in 1986 while he was still a student. He always had problems with the principal who did not like his dreadlocks. Sometimes the principal would make fun of him during morning assembly and say that he would not allow him in his school. One day the principal approached him and his friends and told them that after break they must come with short or combed hair. When they did not, a meeting was called between the principal, his deputy, and us. During the meeting, they challenged the principal on their performance, behaviour and reports from teachers. Bongani was always amongst the top ten in class and managed to get an exemption in his matric results. In 1988, Bongani started to show films as a way of earning some income. In addition, during this year he harassed by police. He was arrested four times (when he had to cut his

dreads) for the possession of *ganja* and has had confrontations with the police many times. According to him, the main reason for the harassment was that they had established themselves as a base for Rastafari. Sometimes police would come and search them for *ganja.*

He started looking for a job in 1989 and found a temporary work as a clerk for Kohler Corrugate. There were about a hundred workers employed, although he was the only one permanently registered. Once he was registered as a permanent worker, he was given a new position as a Clamp Operator. The same year he was elected as a shop steward. In 2000, he was elected as chair of shop stewards, a job he is still holding today. His job consists of ensuring the smooth running of the company, solving workers' problems, and serving on many committees to discuss, amongst other issues, performance bonuses. When he started working, he also started wearing locks. He has never had a problem at work about his being a Rasta and smoking *ganja,* although his bosses knew about it. One of his bosses from England once said to him that he smells of *ganja* but that he was different from others who smoke it.

Bongani is married with one son. His wife is not a Rasta but she shows some interest in the Movement and conforms to what other Rasta women wear, like covering their heads in the presence of men and not wearing anything that exposes their knees.

**Andries "Binghi Bunny" Mashaba (**23 September 2003)

Andries "Binghi Bunny" Mashaba is the first priest of the movement in Daveyton. He was born on 4 April 1963 in Sandra in the Mpumalanga highveld. He attended his lower primary school in a farm school in Yestervalkfontein and did higher primary school in Rietfontein in 1981. He grew up with both his parents until in 1983 when he moved to Daveyton where he stayed with his aunt. He did his matric at Nyathi Secondary School in 1984 and due to unrest; dropped-out of school. After that, he went to a technical College where he qualified as a carpenter. Working together with a bricklayer, he decided to mix

the two trades. In 1988, he started to work as a contract worker doing small jobs for people, a job he is still doing today. His work is not advertised but he gets clients through recommendations of people he once worked for. His work started to do well from 1995 when he became known to many people.

He knew about Rastafari in 1982. Binghi Bunny is married to Doris whom he met in 1991 in Actonville. He was not a Rasta then, but converted after they met and influenced his wife to join the Movement. They have three children who attend the *bingh* with their mother. At present, they have a home in Emaphupheni.

**Kimseun "Kebra Kim" Sithole** (14 May 2003)

Kimseun "Kebra Kim" Sithole was born in Lydenburg on 26 June 1968, the last-born child in a family of ten. He never knew his father, was separated from his brothers and sisters until 1994. In 1975, he moved to Burgersfort where he started school. In Burgersfort, he stayed with his uncle and took care of his cattle and goats after school. His primary education was in a farm school. After completing his Std 5, he went to stay with his mother briefly and then returned to Burgersfort where he continued his schooling. While at school, he became involved in athletics. He dropped-out of school in Std 7.

Kebra Kim started work on a farm earning R5.00 per month, which amounted to R60.00 per annum. These wages were paid yearly, the reason being to keep him on the farm. He worked on the farm for two years until he moved to Gauteng when he was 18, and found work as a building contractor where he earned R15.00 per day. This was good money compared to what he used to earn as a farm labourer. In the meantime, while he was working, he started to search for a certain white man he knew during his school days. The white man, Mr. Visagie owned a cross-country club and since he was an athlete, he wanted to join. After finding him, Mr Visagie gave him a room to stay. Kebra Kim eventually became the number one runner in the club and ran for the club for three years. In 1994, he

was shot while running. Thereafter, he could no longer run and went home after ten years. Mr Visagie gave him R16.000.00, which he used to buy a Kombi from the club. While at Burgersfort, one of his sisters visited from Daveyton. She knew the whereabouts of his other sisters and his brother. They drove to Pretoria to meet his sibling. The next day they drove to Daveyton to see his eldest sister and his brother who stays in Barcelona, an informal settlement in Daveyton. However, his brother, an alcoholic, took his Kombi and turned it into a taxi. He sent him home with a promise of sending him money every month but ended up selling it.

After the Kombi was sold, with no income, he decided to sell some of his appliances to raise money to go to Daveyton. His wife, who was in Newcastle, Kwa-Zulu-Natal, also came to join him and they lived with his brother for six months until he chased them out of his shack. They then went to live with his sister. Within three weeks, he found a part-time job washing cars in the Boksburg Flee Market where he worked from 1996 to 1998. Although the market was open for two days per week, the money he could sometimes make R300.00 per day. With two days work he was able to buy a place of his own and a few building materials. In order to supplement his wages, he opened a carwash and a pap and steak business next to the taxi rank.

In Boksburg, he met some white people who were opening a flee market in Kempton Park and they gave him a job of distributing pamphlets. However, he was fired after they found that he was buying from them and selling for himself. Then he decided to start his own small business at Kempton Park selling cellular phone accessories; he is still selling them today.

Kebra Kim started to grow dreadlocks in 1989 but did not know a thing about Rastafari. He became a Rasta in 1994. He was not influenced by anybody or attracted by anything but had this feeling as early as 1988, and in 1994 he decided on his own to stop eating meat and become a true Rasta because he was already wearing dreadlocks. He met his first wife in Soweto while he was still a

cross-country runner, when she would come to Soweto to visit her sister. She was not Rasta but was inspired by him and started to attend a *binghi.* They never had a chance to get married because when he was about to pay *lobola,* both her parents passed away; she was their only daughter. Before they could get married (according to the Rasta tradition) in 2002, his wife passed away. They are blessed with two children, a boy and a girl who are also members of the *binghi* and attend it every Sabbath without fail. Presently, he stays with his late wife's cousin-sister.

# Appendix B

## B1 - ITHIOPIAN ANTHEM

This Anthem was obtained from the *Jahug: Nyahbinghi Order Theocracy Reign* and modified according to the way they sing it within the *House of Fire* (*see modification written in italics*).

*Ithiopia* the land of *I'nI* (our) Fathers
The land where our *RASTAFARI* (JAH) loves to be
As the swift clouds are suddenly gathered
Thy children are gathered to thee
With our Red, Gold and Green floating Over *I'nI*
With our Emperor to shield *I'nI* from wrong
With *RASTAFARI* (our JAH) and our future before *I'nI*
We will hail thee with shouts and with song

JAH RASTAFARI is our Negus Negus I (Chorus)
Who keeps *Ithiopia* free
To advance, with truth and right - truth and right
To advance, with love and light - love and light
With righteousness leading
I'nI hail to I'nI Rastafari and I King

*Imanity* (humanity) pleading one Rastafari for I'nI ALL

O eternal Rastafari of all ages
Grant unto I'nI sons that lead
Thy *wisemind thou* (wisdom is) given to I'nI ages
When Blackman was so in need

Thy voice through the dim past has spoken
*Ithiopia* shall stretch forth her hands
By *Rastafari* (thee) shall all barriers be broken
And *Mount* Zion bless our dear Motherland

*Ithiopia* thy tyrants are falling
Who smote thee upon thy knees
Thy children are heartically calling
From over the distance seas
Rastafari the great one has heard I'nI
With the *irits* (spirit) of love, he has stirred I'nI
To be one all through the trodding years

**B2 - PSALMS**

***Psalm 1***

Blessed is the I who walked not in the counsel of the unholy
Nor sitted in the sits of the scornful
But his delight is in the law of the Most High
In his law he do meditate day and night
And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water
That brings its fruits in its own season
Its leaves shall not wither
And whatsoever do shall prosper

The unholy are not so but are like chaff that the wind drives away
Therefor the unholy shall not stand in the judgement

Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous
For Selassie knew the way of the righteous
But ways of the unholy shall perish in the lake of fire SELAH !!!!

***Psalm 121***

*InI* lift up *InI* eyes unto the hills from where *cometh InI* help
*InI* help comes from Selassie who created heaven *on* earth
He will not suffer thy foot to be moved
He who keeps thee will not slumber
Behold! He who *keepeth* Zion shall neither slumber nor sleep
Selassie is thy keeper
He is thy shade upon thy right hand
The sun shall not smite Thee by day nor the moon by night
Selassie I shall *iserve* thee from all evil
HIM shall *iserve* thy soul
Selassie I shall *isrve* thy *yarding* in and thy *yarding* out
From this *ime* forth even *forivermore*
SELAH !!!!

***Psalm 122***

I was glad when they say unto I let us yard unto the house of the Most high
*InI* feet shall stand within they gates O' Ithiopia
Ithiopia is *builded* as the city that is compacted together
Where the tribes goes up
The tribe of the Most high unto the testimony of Zion
To give thanks and *ises* in the name of Selassie I

For there sit the throne of judgement
The throne of the house of David
Pray for peace over Ithiopia
They shall prosper that love thee
Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy Palaces
For my brethren and companion sake *InI* now say
Love be within the because of the house of Selassie I *InI* Father
*InI* will seek thy good SELAH !!!!

***Psalm 133***

Behold - how good and how pleasant it is for *InI* sons and *dawtas* to dwell together in love and *inity*
It is like a precious ointment upon the head running down upon thy beard
Even InI beard went down to the skirt of *InI* garment and as the dew of Harmon and as the dew that decedent upon the mountain of Zion for the Most high Emperor Haile I Selassie I commanded the blessing even life forever more
SELAH !!!!

***Psalm 24***

The earth is Selassie and the fulness thereof the world and they that who dwell therein

For He had founded upon the sea and established it upon the floods
Who shall ascend unto the hills of the Emperor or who shall stand in His holy judgement

Is he who have clear hands and a pure heart who had never
lifted up his soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitful
He shall receive the blessing from the Most high

*InI* are the generation of them that seek HIM that seek thy holy face
O' Emperor Haile I

Lift up yeh heads o'yeh black man even be lifted up everlasting doors and the king of glory shall come in

Who is this king of Zion?
Haile I Selassie I Ras Tafari strong and mighty in battle

Lift up yeh heads o'yeh black *oman* even be lifted up everlasting doors and the mother of *iration* shall dwell in

Who is this mother of *iration*?

Empress Menen I

Ras Tafari of Host

HIM IS THE KING OF ZION

**B3 - RASTAFARI ROYAL CREED**

Prince' and Princess' shall come out of Egypt, I an I Ethiopians shall stretch forth I an' I hands and hearts unto Jah, O thou Jah of Ethiopia Ian'I own Ivine Majesty

Thy irits come into Ian'I hearts to dwell within the fullness of righteousness, lead Ian'I

Help Ian'I to forgive that Ian'I must be forgiven.

Teach Ian'I love and loyality on earth as it is in Hola Mount Zion, I'dure Ian'I with thy wise mind, thy knowledge, and thy Iverstanding, to do thy will O JAH, Rastafari!

Ian'I blessing unto thee O Father, Let the hungry be fed, the naked be fed, the naked be clothed, the sick be nourished, the aged be protected and the sick be cared for

Deliver Ian'I from the hands of Ian'I enemies that Ian'I must be fruitful in these first days when all thine enemies have passed and decayed, in the depths of the seas, in the depths of the earth, the belly of the beast, or lake of fire

O give Ian'I all a place in thy Ever Living Kingman . This I ask in thy great and thunderable name, Haile I Selassie I, JAH Rastafari!

Thou art King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Conquering of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of thyself and the light of this world. Ian'I own Ivine Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie I. First A'cient King of Creation. Though Alpha & Omega, I beginning without an end, First without last. The Ilectorate of all Iman faith and ruler of the Iniverse.

So Haile I JAH and King, JAH, RASTAFARI! Almighty I JAH, RASTAFARI! Great and thunderable I JAH, RASTAFARI!

Bless Ian'I and Sanctify IanI. Cause thine Holy Countenance to shine upon Ian'I so Ian'I shall be redeemed to trample the dragon!

Let the words of I an I mouth and the meditation of I an I heart humble thyself before the Emperor Haile Selassie. Thou art Ian'I Redeemer. Jah who liveth and reigneth for Iver and Iver. As long as the sun and the moon I'dureth throughout all generations. In the name of the living I, JAH, RASTAFARI

# Appendix C

## C1 CHANTS

### *(1) Him Have to Move*

Him have to move, Him have to move.
Him haf fe move, Him haf fe move.
When Jah Rastafari get ready, him haf fe move.

Pope Paul have to move, Him have to move
(Elizabitch, Satan, Babylon, Downpressor, Apartheid),
Him haf fe move, Him haf fe move.
When Rastafari get ready, him have to move.

Him could a Black, him could a White
Him could a rich, Him could a poor
When Rastafari get ready, him have to move

### *(3) Burn Down Colonialism*

I n I a burn down colonialism (rep)
I n I a shining the light of JAH Rastafari
n I a burn down colonialism

### *(7) Leave Babylon*

Leave Babylon (Black People) leave Babylon
Leave Babylon and come
Look in your life Black People see how you live
When Jah was here they had done him the very same
Don't mind your friend for they will lough you to scorn
You better leave Babylon and come

***(10) Proud to Be Black***

Proud to be Black I am an Ithiopian
Proud to be Black I am an Ithiopian
Moses and Aaron - King Solomon and Sheba too
Proud to be Black I am an Ithiopian

We *Afrikans* have a glorious history
We built the first University Sankore
Inhotep the father of medicine
He was an Afrikan
Proud to be Black I am an Ithiopian

***(13) Gonna Be Fire***

It gonna be fire, fire Nyahbinghi fire
It gonna be fire, fire Nyahbinghi fire
Everyman gonna get his pay according to the work he has done
It gonna be fire, fire Nyahbinghi fire

***(15) Jah Got the Whole World***

JAH got the whole world in his hands
JAH got the whole world in his hands
JAH got the whole world in his hands
JAH got the whole world in his hands

JAH got the tiny little baby in his hands
(continue as above) Write in full all these…

JAH got the Ark of the Covenant in his hands
(as above)

JAH got the Golden Sceptre in his hands
(as above)

JAH got the sword of Solomon
(as above)
Jah got the lighting and thunder
(as above)

***(20) One Black Love***

One Black Love a JAH JAH One Black Love
One Black Love Rastafari chant
One Black Love (rep)

For if your Mother won't come
and if your Father won't come
and if your Mother won't come
Leave him and come for a One Black Love

***(21) Is Your Name Written There***

Is your name written there in the Lambs Book of Life
On that terrible Judgement morning
When the books are open wide
Yes is your name written there in the Lambs Book of Life
You better ask yourself that question
Is your name written there

***(23) Babylon A Follower***

"Any Any where Rastafari trod (rep)
Any Any where Rastafari trod Babylon a follow (rep)

JAH JAH never send dem fe go watch and peep

JAH JAH never send dem fe go watch and peep
JAH JAH never send dem fe go watch and peep
Babylon a follow

Only one place that him cannot trod
Only one place that him cannot trod
Only one place him cannot trod
In a Holy Mount Zion

***(24) Ithiopians Are You Ready***

Ithiopians are you ready are you ready now to trod
Ithiopians are you ready are you ready now to trod
Morning Star trod over, trod over, trod over
JAH Morning Star trod over
I n I ready now to trod

***(31 Children of Afrika***

We are the children of the Ancient Afrikans
Ancient Afrikans, Ancient Afrikans
We are the children of the Ancient Afrikans
Oh! Oh! Yes we are

Let's come together we're the Ancient Afrikans
Ancient Afrikans, Ancient Afrikans
Let's come together we're the Ancient Afrikans
Oh! Oh! Yes we are

Reading and writing come from Ancient Afrika
Ancient Afrikans, Ancient Afrikans (rep)
Oh! Oh! Yes we are

Maths and physics come from Ancient Africa
Ancient Afrikans, Ancient Afrikans (rep)
Oh! Oh! Yes we are
Civilisation came from Ancient Afrika
Ancient Afrikans, Ancient Afrikans (rep)
Oh! Oh! Yes we are
Civilisation came from Ancient Afrika

***(75) Get Together***

Get together get together get together
In Fari
So let us all get together with Fari
Come let us love one another like Brothers and Sisters
Come let us all get together with Fari

***(85) 400 Years***

400 years in a Babylon - 400 years
For I n I never yet cease the fire
Till Babylon wall burn down

***(96) Babylon Throne Gone Down***

I n I a trod away home to Zion, trod away home (rep)
One bright morning when the work is over
I will trod away home
For you hear the voice of the Rastaman say
Babylon you throne gone down, gone down
Babylon you throne gone down

For John saw the angels with the Seven Seals chanting
Babylon you throne gone down, gone down

Babylon you throne gone down

***(98) Mother of Salem (A Chant for the Sanctification of Children)***

When Mothers of Salem, their children brought to Negus
The stern disciples drove them back and bid them to depart
But Negus saw them when they fled
And sweetly smiled and kindly said
Suffer not the little children to come unto JAH

For I will receive them and fold them in my bosom
I'll be a shepherd to those lambs
So drive them not away
For if their hearts to I they give
They shall with I in Zion live
Suffer not the little children to come unto JAH

How kind was our Negus
To bid those children welcome
For there are many thousands
Who have never heard his name
The Bible they have never read
They don't know what Rastafari said
Suffer not the little children to come unto JAH

Oh may the heathen
From every tribe and nation
Will obey the blessed word
And chase the Devil away
Oh, shine upon them from above
And show thyself a JAH of love
Teach the little children to come unto JAH

***(120) Babylon A Weak Boy***

Babylon a weak boy
Rasta a go teal down Babylon
Rasta a go teal down Babylon
Rasta a go teal down Babylon

I n I Mount Zion go teal down Babylon
Rasta a go teal down Babylon
Freedom fighters Rasta a go teal down Babylon
Babylon Rasta a go teal down Babylon

***(125) Fire Fire Seazers and Comb***

Is to fire seazers and comb
Fire fire seazers and comb is the only way to Mount Zion
Fire fire seazers and comb

And you never go to Zion with seazers and comb
You can't go to Zion with your seazers and comb
Is the only way one way to Mount Zion l
Fire fire seazers and comb and razor

**C2 POEMS**

All the poems below are written by *Kingman*

***Marijuana Inna Me Brains***

For marijuana inna me brains
Is the herb that makes me feel no pain
Marijuana is a flower
Is the herb that gives me power

Is for marijuana inna me brains
Is the herb that makes me feel no pain
Police him catch I when I smoke it,
Without a smile neither or a joke
For marijuana inna me brains
Is the herb that makes me feel no pain
Marijuana is a flower
Is the herb that gives me power
Is for marijuana inna me brains
Is the herb that makes me feel no pain
Police him always trouble
Though I n I every time humble
For marijuana inna me brains
Is the herb that makes me feel no pain
Marijuana is a flower
Is the herb that gives me power
Is for marijuana inna me brains
Is the herb that makes me feel no pain
Police come jealous when him see I dignity
For him never know my loyalty
For marijuana inna me brains
Is the herb that makes me feel no pain
Marijuana is a flower
Is the herb that gives me power

***African Caterpillar***

I am an African Caterpillar
I am here to be the pillar of the truth
I am the soil caterpillar
African caterpillar is what I am
Righteous is my desire

Truth is my meditation
For that:  I am an African Caterpillar

I am an African Caterpillar
I am here to level the road for the king
    Rastafari Haile Selassie I The First
I am the way that need to be followed
African caterpillar is what I am
I can lead to the greener pastures
I can lead you the ever living life
For that:  I am an African Caterpillar
I am an African Caterpillar
I am here to straighten the curves
African caterpillar is what I am
Listen to my word to be your advice
Listen to my word if you want to live nice
For that:  I am an African Caterpillar

***Christmas***

Is it about happiness?
Or is it about madness?
Is it about drunkenness?
Or is it about business?
Or is it about carelessness?
I just want to know about this Christmas
Because it is just a wonderful mess
    Everybody, anyone is free to do everything
    I mean everything could be shameful
    But can be done without any question
    Animals are slaughtered on this day

    of Christmas, No kindness, shame with the Christmas

I hear cries and crisis everywhere
Happiness changed to be madness of Christmas
I just want to know about this Christmas
It can bring you the pain instead of joy
It can leave you insane and in vain
It may never leave you undestroyed
It can bring some hurting and harming
It can only bring that little harmony
I just want to know about this Christmas
I no feel that happiness but now sadness
I no more see that love on this day but now hatred
I only smell the burning of innocent animals
It is just merciless on this day
I just want to know about this Christmas
Because it is just a wonderful mess

***Mandela of the Old Times***

Mandela of the old times
He can witness this
That Mandela of now is just
Equality is what the man desire
Is the reason he was have to be baptised by fire
He ever share the cup with Him This man
He once been told to think like a soldier who
Who is more than a politicians
Yes Mandela of the old times
Who ever yard in jail
Thinking like a soldier
Wanting to save the nation
I am still talking about the real Mandela

Who had never been programmed by any man

But by the Most High Rastafari
But when Mandela comes back
He was Mandela of now
Thinking like a real politician
Setting the laws to allow abortion and prevention
Yebo Mandela: "Most Africans never die even lost Amandla"
See How Mandela him walk and him dance
Hear how Mandela him talk and him lough
Not like before
Him can yard inna jail
Him use to have some beards
And we could get fear when we see him
But the one of now
Him no have a single beard

***Aliens Want To Enslave Mankind***

Living in the city of illusion
Hoping to see mankind rising from death
While aliens standing in I n I way
Continually defiling mankind
To deform mankind is their jute
Their presence bring disaster to I n I

Living among the aliens
Praying for guidance and protection
Me see the traps everywhere to catch mankind
RISE and be WISE
Haile Ras Tafari and be sure
For righteousness is for de upright in heart

Living in de death city

Politrics and religion manifest in man, o'man and children
Conversion is a must
For thy children are heartically calling
So make dem secure
Consider dis me people

Living within de last generation
De generation which will live forever
Cause life and de blessing are commanded to dat generation
If you LOVE to LIVE
DO GOOD and LIVE ELERNAIY
In de name of DE LIVING I O Selah

***Haile Selassie I Call***

For daily happenings are no more taken seriously
Ignorance still rules
While mankind is spiritually dead
Spiritual confusion dat lead to curse
Dwell upon corruption without consideration

Living without consciousness
This is pain
Face de reality of life
Awake from your sleep: I mean awake from your walking grave
Do what you did at first

No use in turning back
Remember forward ever, backward never
For eternal I n I must live
To iserve that you have to be firm

Comply with de order of H.I. M

Order dat righteousness
Emancipate thyself from mental illness
Liquidate what is of Satanism
Save thyself from serving Satan

Pope John Paul in his throne proclaiming de mark
Corruption, illusion, pollution and confusion are de habitants of his throne
A throne with no dignity, the man whom sits upon have no solutions
Well, King Selassie I is de Most High Priest

***Word of Thunder***

Time to time I do mistakes
For I n I living in the city of illusion
Illusion that brainwash de nation
However, who shall ascend in de hills and situp
In de sacred place

Liquidate de limitation of thinking
Remember Selassie I say, I n I must be like high in thinking
Large in outlook and greater in feelings
For I n I to preserve the gifts on a spiritual level
Me see dem inna me image
But REFUSING, DENYING and MISUSING their powers
However, I n I are de image of Emmanuel I Selassie I the first
So do good, make sure you live clean
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life

KINGS and QUEENS, PRINCES and PRINCESSES of Ithiopia (Africa)
Haile Ras Tafari without shame
Watch your actions

Don't get caught in de fantasies of illusion

Be wise in de name of de Most High Lord Selassie I

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