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1994

# SIREN

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*Decade  
for Cultural  
Development*



**1988  
to  
1997**



## DANCEHALL CULTURE

INSIDE: • MUTA & YASUS • MARVA BROWN • AGAINST SLACKNESS

## SISTREN OUT DEH!

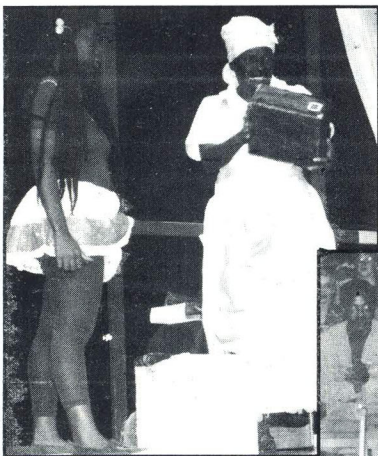
February 12-20, Sistren participated in the "Women Empowering Communication Conference" in Bangkok, Thailand. This Conference was sponsored by the Women's Association for Christian Communication (WACC) in London. Highlights of the Conference were **ISIS International** and **The International Women's Tribune Centre** to which Sistren contributed.

Students from the **School for International Training (SIT)** based in Vermont, USA visited **Sistren's Headquarters** for a workshop in March. An historical overview of Sistren's work, videos on women's issues produced by Sistren and a hands-on session in the **Textile Department** constituted their activities for the day. The workshop was led by **Sistren's Bev Hanson**.

Sistren helped to coordinate activities for the **Women's Tent** and conducted a number of workshops at the **Sustainable Development Conference** in Barbados between April 17 and 30.

A three day workshop on **Governance-Strategic Planning in the Non-profit Organisation** was recently sponsored by the **Association of Development Agencies (ADA)** which contracted **David Kelleher**, a Canadian Consultant in organisational management to conduct the workshop. **Sistren** was an active and enthusiastic participant.

Due to popular demand **KULCHAFUSHAN**, Sistren's most current and seventh theatre produc-



*Kulchafushan's cast members performing in Germany*



tion, is in rehearsals for its second run in communities around the Island.

**KULCHAFUSHAN**, was also taken on a tour of nine cities in Germany during early May. The tour was sponsored by **Pachanga Promotions** in Berlin.

**Sistren's Beverly Hanson** and playwright **Pauline Matthie**, teacher at **Calabar High School** for boys are scheduled to represent **Sistren** at the **Women's Playwright Conference** in Australia in July.

**Sistren's** work continues to expand, now they are working with girls from the **Musgrave Girls Home**. **Sistren's Joy Erskine** is teaching the girls to play musical instruments. Classes take place at **Sistren's** Head Office on Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

**The Annual Schoolers' Workshop** is on schedule for **July-August** so watch out for your invite. The theme this year is **Drug Abuse**.

**Sistren** is continuing its series of workshops in rural and urban schools. The following schools participated: **Buff Bay Secondary, Bog Walk Secondary, Ewarton Secondary, McGarth Secondary, Port Maria Secondary** and **Charlie Smith Comprehensive**. The topics discussed in the workshops were **Teenage Pregnancy, Teenage Parenting, and Drug Abuse**.

**Afolashade, Bev Hanson, Vyris Gordon-Hewitt** and **Latoya Segree**, **Sistren's** members presented a skit on **Career Choices/Gender Reversal** at the **Wyndham Hotel** in April. The skit was presented at a seminar on **Gender Relations: Men and Women Together**. The Seminar was put on by the **Entrepreneurial Extension Centre** in association with the **College of Arts Science and Technology's (CAST's) Students Union** and sponsored by the **Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), ACCC** and **CAST**. One hundred and fifty students participated and

presenters included **President of CAST Dr. Alfred Sangster, Mrs. Sandra Glasgow, Manager of the Entrepreneurial Centre, Dr. Trevor Munroe, Head of the Depart-**

**ment of Government, University of the West Indies, Mrs. Beverly Anderson-Manley** and **Rev. Lewin Williams**.

In April a workshop on **HIV/AIDS** was held at **Sistren's Headquarters, 20 Kingston Crescent**.

## SISTREN

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**Sistren** is produced three times a year by the **Sistren Theatre Collective** as part of its ongoing efforts to highlight issues of concern to women in the society. **Sistren** is a non-profit collective of women. Other activities include theatre, workshops using **Drama-in-Education** methodology, and research. **Sistren** has also experimented with film and video and produced a book of members' life stories, **Lionheart Gal**. **Sistren Textiles** is the group's income-earning project. Contact: **20 Kensington Crescent, Kingston 5, Jamaica, West Indies. Tel: (809) 92-9247/92-96171.**

# ACQUAINTED

## SISTREN PROFILE



Betti Campbell

*I am proud to have been a part of that process...*

Meet Betti Campbell, textile designer, innovative and dynamic business woman, mother, and long time friend of Sistren. We are sitting in the small garden under the tree and you can smell the sea in the slight breeze as Betti modestly tells of her achievements and her goals. I find Betti hard at work at a 20 foot table covered in scarfs. She is applying the most intricate of designs. Of course I had to wait until she finished that round of colour; until she returns an important telephone call, which she has to go across the road to make since

there are no telephones in the Olde Goal in Port Royal where she now has her work shop.

You have to listen keenly to hear Betti as her voice doesn't rise one decibel above what you would associate with a young child. But do not mistake the soft voice for timidity.

She graduated from the Middlesex Polytechnic in England with a Diploma in Art and Designing and where printed textile was her specialty. While in London she continued to design costumes and was Stage Manager for the Radical Poets and Players. In this group she connected with other

## PERSONAL NOTES

### WELCOME:

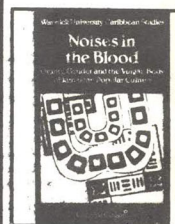
Sistren extends a warm welcome to new staff members, Accountant, Olga Gray and Receptionist/Clerical Assistant, Gillian Brown. Hoping their stay will be mutually beneficial.

### CONDOLENCES:

Our heartfelt sympathy on the passing of Honor Ford-Smith's mother Dr. Joyce Tate.

### CONGRATULATIONS:

Congratulations to Dr. Carolyn Cooper on the recent launching of her book **Noises in the Blood**. Subtitled, **Orality, Gender and the "Vulgar" Body of Jamaican Popular Culture** the book examines



the problem of the relationship between the written word and the spoken and addresses the need for not only economic but cultural liberation. It looks at the positive aspects of our oral tradition.

Black West Indians, musicians, actors and performance poets. She loved it. This connection to her roots.

Living in England was a means to an end, she says emphatically. "I gained the experience I needed" and having done so Betti,

*Cont'd on pg. 29*

**FEATURES**

**Muta and Yasus defend the culture** "... its love and harmony that it originated out of and if it got misguided, it can be redeemed, cleansed and baptised," says **Yasus Afari** in an interview with **Imani Tafari** .....7

**Lady Saw... Dancehall Donette.** "*There are two sides to Lady Saw. There is the conscious side and the other side; I'm good at any side.*" , says **Lady Saw** in an interview with **Imani Tafari** . .....8

**Dancing Around Development."** ... *development means understanding the past in order to use its lessons to determine appropriate strategies of social transformation...*" says **Carolyn Cooper** in her discourse on dancehall .....15

**Against slackness, lewdness and gun lyrics.** *Children live what they learn ... and what t hey are living is dancehall. So she constantly fights against slackness...* **Patrick Smikle** chats with **Louise Fraser-Bennett**, President of the Sound System Association. ....16

**Glamorous, Glitterous: Dancehall Fashion.** *At the dancehall... sex is taken out of the closet and treated as something positive and wholesome...* says a dancehall patron in an interview with **Melody Walker**..... 18

**Marson, exceptional and crazy... Honor Ford-Smith** continues to explore **Una Marson's** life story .....28

**We Moved on From Those Days.** **Lana McFarlane** gives us poetry on South Africa .....33

**SPECIALS**

**Development? In whose interest?** **CAS** explores the real meaning of development .....6

**Just Another Day for Marva Brown.** **Verna Lee Davis-Daly** explores the reflections of a 40 year old domestic helper's mind .....21

**Warning to Parents.** Cartoon character stickers are being used to introduce children to hard drugs .....26

**Actor Boy Awards.** **KULCHAFUSHAN's** **Maxine Osbourne** caps Best Supporting Actress Award .....30

**REGULARS**

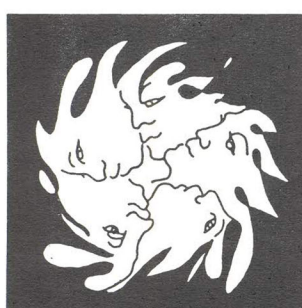
**Profile** features textile designer **Betti Campbell** .. .....3

**"Women in the Arts.** *It is an inspiration to the sole,*" says potter **Jean Taylor-Bushay** as she talks about her art and the possibilities for the future .....24

**Health Update.** **Sistren** congratulates **Terrian** for her bravery and love in publicly announcing that she is a victim of AIDs .....27

**Can I call you Sister.** .....31

**From Our Mailbag** .....35



## PROMOTE AND PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

**T**he decade 1988 to 1997 has been designated the World Decade for Cultural Development by the United Nations. UNESCO is the lead implementing agency. In outlining its approach to the Decade UNESCO defined culture as everything which makes up people's lives: their literature, music, art, dance, beliefs, values, attitudes, customs and social relations.

Development programmes which do not take cultural matters into consideration will continue to fail as they have done over the last 40 years. All cultures must occupy equal pride of place if the acceptance of this difference between peoples is to work. This is especially important in this age of rapid scientific and technological growth when alien cultural values are being imposed on different cultures.

In this regard the role of development agencies is very clear. It must be to recognize, promote and preserve the positive aspects of our history and traditions. As another dimension of its contribution to this process Sistren Theatre Collective is featuring in this and another two Issues some institutions critical to transmitting cultural values. These are our music - in this instance the dancehall culture and in upcoming Issues - the family and institutions and individuals working to promote the preservation of our artistic culture.

This Issue explores different aspects of dancehall culture and how it can contribute to the development process. What aspects are retentions of our African heritage? Of the modern influences what aspects are positive and need to be preserved and which are negative and need to be eliminated?

There are those who argue that the dancehall has been around since the 1930s when the popular music of the dancehall was Rhythm and Blues and the popular artistes were people like Louis Jordan and Wyane "Blood Shot Eyes" Harris. The major changes started in the 60s and have continued since, they argue. Formerly the dancehall was a place of respect where people went to dance and the lyrics were monitored by producers.

The changes which have taken place in the dancehall represent a natural progres-

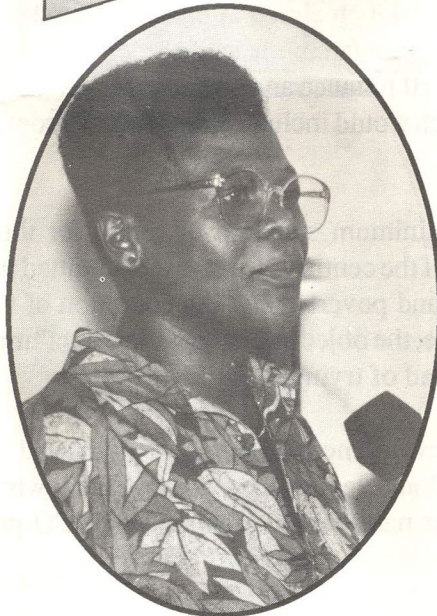
sion and mirror changes taking place in the wider society. Dancehall is also especially attractive to the economically disadvantaged as it provides an 'easy and quick' way to improve their material situation. Since dancehall is here to stay in one form or another then one task must be to isolate and channel the positive aspects of it in the right direction.

Wherever possible all efforts must be made not only to preserve, but also to revitalize aspects of our heritage which are in danger and need to be reconciled with modern life. The search is for a new balance between the factors of change and the demands for continuity on the basis of the principle of the equal dignity of all cultures.

The messages telling people to deny their traditional values, attitudes, customs and practices are numerous and multidimensional. To resist will take conscious and consistent effort and there are many who are joining the ranks of resistance as it becomes increasingly clear that "development" must be defined by the people and for the people.

In this issue Mutabaruka and Yasus Afari explore the negative and positive aspects of the dancehall. Performer Lady Saw speaks to the need for the older generation of musicians to educate the younger ones. Carolyn Cooper explores the role dancehall can play in the process of development, Melody Walker talks to the women in dancehall and hear their reasons for defending the dancehall and Patrick Smikle speaks with a female manager in the industry. Among the regulars are Health Update on Aids, and Women in the Arts which features potter Jean Taylor-Bushay. As a new feature we begin the serialization of the lives of two 40 year old women who are looking back at their years. It is the story of a domestic helper and her 'Missus'. We begin with the reflections of the helper.

Happy reading and please keep your contributions coming. We need more contributors to the magazine, which is one reason we continue to have difficulty in getting the magazine out on time. Again our sincerest apologies and we ask your patience while we renew our efforts to improve.



# DEVELOPMENT?

# IN WHOSE INTEREST?

by CAS



ince the end of World War II policymakers and workers in the development community have been chasing the elusive dream of "development".

There is abundant evidence that the measures taken by the national and international community over the last 40 years have not reduced the gap between the rich and the poor ... but the pursuit of "development" continues.

In fact the majority of Jamaicans will tell you that it is increasingly difficult for them to achieve their basic needs of food, clothes and shelter. Yet, they are told that they are on this path to "development"; they are told that the country's net national reserves are increas-

ing; they are told that soon they will no longer need to sign IMF agreements and they are told that the pain they are experiencing now will bear fruits in the future.

But what is this goal called "development"? In whose interest is it being pursued? Is it attainable? What is the alternative?

"Development" has been defined in many ways. It has been classified as a growth in per capita income in the areas of the world designated as "underdeveloped". It was felt that an increase in income would result in an improvement in people's social condition. The end of the 1960s, the first Development Decade, did see an increase in per capita income but the social conditions of the majority were in fact worse. "Development" had created large groups of poorer people, and the exclusion, stagnation and marginalization of others.

The Second Development Decade, the 70s therefore attempted to combine the economic and social needs of people in formulating policies and programmes for development. The "Basic Needs Approach" which aimed at placing humanity at the centre of development was therefore formulated. It said there were many different roads to development: advocated self reliance and promoted fundamental social, political and economic changes which would include all aspects of people's lives.

The aim of the Decade was to attain a minimum standard of living for those designated underdeveloped before the end of the century. It was even admitted that development would not eliminate hunger and poverty: that the condition of two fifths of mankind might even worsen. Hence, the objective of "development" must now be how to cope with those needs instead of trying to satisfy them.

This approach proved very attractive to development experts. It vindicated the World Bank's approach of 'target groups' and legitimized the approach which advocated programmes suited to particular national situations. UNESCO pro-

*cont'd on pg. 13*

.....

*It takes no student of psychology to understand the implications of thinking of one self as underdeveloped. It undermines your self confidence. One loses pride in ones own culture, and the logical pursuit becomes the need to escape.*

.....

# MUTA AND YASUS DEFEND THE CULTURE

by Imani Tafari Ama

Mutabaruka and Yasus Afari are leading dub-poets and see themselves as guardians of Jamaican culture. They are disturbed by certain aspects of the dancehall experience. Muta is opposed to what he sees as the "slackness". Yasus while challenging the "slackness" sees it as an evolutionary experience. In a recent interview they both shared their views with **Sistren magazine**.

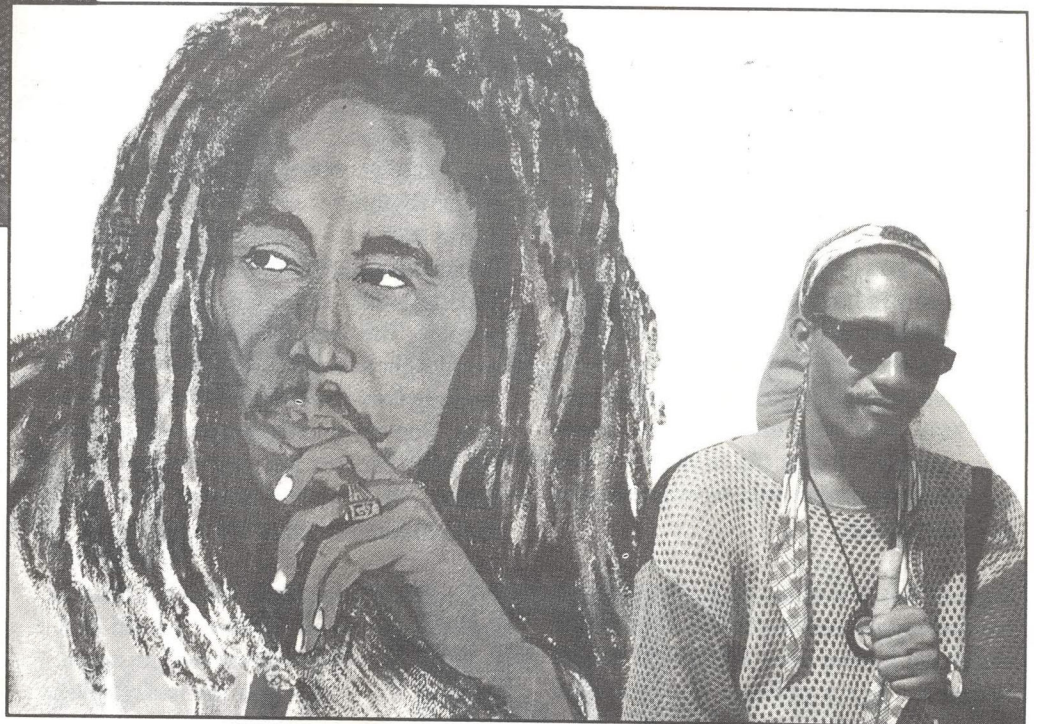
**MUTA:** The slackness was there all the while but it wasn't a culture... now the dancehall has made things like that (a mini skirt) into a culture. (Dancehall Queen) Carlene is a culture; is a thing now for everybody to look like Carlene. It's a bad thing because it don't reflect the true essence of the people dem who originally are from African descendants. It's a European concept that has crept into the culture of Black people.

Carlene is the biggest thing in Jamaica right now and she get so much promotion because she strip herself naked. Now the middle class people can get Carlene to come to their poolside; normally this is something that they would have to hide and enjoy.

cont'd on pg. 8



Unrepentant defender of the Culture,  
Dub Poet, Mutabaruka



Yasus Afari overshadowed by the source of his  
inspiration the Hon. Robert Nesta Marley.

## DEFEND THE CULTURE (cont'd from pg. 7)

Some people have said that dancehall music is anti-establishment; this is not true. The dancehall music is the most pro-establishment culture ever come inna Jamaica. It is dealing with exactly what the society is dealing with. The lewdness, the downgrading of women, the slackness, materialism, gun violence. The establishment is not against any of these things that dancehall personifies.

Dancehall is one of the most destructive thing that ever come inna dis country yet you have man inna it who a deal wid certain good things.

The deejays colluding with the system. People would want to say that is because "them is ghetto people", but most youth who come into music come from the ghetto and ghetto people don't must think that way. It's just a set of ones who are promoting dat. It is not a threat (to the establishment), dat is why a lot of the big recording companies deh behind it.

It's definitely establishment; more money is in dancehall now than in anything else. The credence that is given to dancehall music now is unprecedented. Reggae is the core and the heart; Rasta is what project reggae and it's still struggling, mainly because it (Rastafari) is anti-establishment. It's not an accident. If you look pon di dancehall culture and you look pon what was being propagated in the seventies, there is no similarity. It's the total opposite. Everything inna di dancehall culture have an opposite to wha inna di reggae. If you have ganja over ya so, you have cocaine ova deh so. If you did have red, gold and green ova ya so you have gold chain ova deh so. If you did have dreadlocks ova ya so, every man trim off dem head ova deh so. If you did have man who did raggamuffin now you have man who dress up inna pretty fancy clothes. If you did have lyrics wha uphold woman now you have lyrics wha degrade women.

None of this is a coincidence because we see that reggae music project all over the world and it neva have no million dollars behind it. It's a political thing because

now... how is it that you have so much big record companies - all the major ones - signing up Jamaican artistes?

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*I personally don't give no credence to dance hall culture. I don't see it as anything positive. I think it's the worst thing that ever happened to Jamaican culture.*

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The Jamaican artistes right now sell out the rhythm to the americanisation of the music. In other words, every artist that get big in Jamaica, where dancehall supposed to be big, don't hit with a dancehall tune. All the tune dem dat dem hit wid is an americanisation of the dancehall rhythm. The only thing that differentiate the dancehall in the States from the American music is the language that is still maintained inna the music.

First time a man would say that a group like Third World sell out. We now see that an artiste like Shabba Ranks has not hit with a reggae rhythm yet nobody don't say Shabba Ranks sell out. The tune dem dat Buju Banton hit with in America is the same ting. The tune dem dat hit is made by white people. The biggest reggae group in the world right now is UB40 and every one of the song dem dat dem do is a reggae make over. Snow who is the biggest deejay - him sell more records last year than any other deejay - is a white Canadian who never come to Jamaica up to the other day.

We see what the white record companies are doing as a plot fe dilute, get rid of dis culture which was making such an impression on the minds and mentality of the

world. Jamaica is like a cultural superpower; no other island in the world make such an impression on people and it come out of the Rasta connection to the reggae. It don't come out of the dancehall connection to the world. The dancehall connection right now is really an American business because anywhere in the world you go now you will hear reggae but you don't necessarily hear dancehall. Most dancehall artistes can't have a world tour but a reggae artist like Burning Spear can tour Europe, Japan, anywhere inna di world. Wid dancehall, you big because you big inna New York or Miami.

When dem suck it dry di record companies will throw it way because the dancehall culture is not on the rise. As a matter of fact, it would appear that the dancehall culture has reached its pinnacle whether in terms of the music or the fashion. It's a cycle though; what goes around comes around and the reggae music is what makes everything level. People are going to realize that Alton Ellis, Bob Andy and people like dat are really the power behind the Jamaican music.

I personally don't give no credence to dance hall culture. I don't see it as anything positive. I think it's the worst thing that ever happened to Jamaican culture. Is only things like the old hits which coming back - both in tunes and in shows.

YASUS: Dancehall always plays a role in the evolution of the Jamaican musical experience, as a place where people gather and celebrate music and dance. This happened in the different phases of the evolution, ska, rocksteady, you name it. So, we know the link between language and people's experience, geography and history

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*... it's love and harmony that it originated out of and if it got misguided, it can be redeemed, cleansed and baptised*

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cont'd on pg. 12



**DANCEHALL**

*by Imani Tafari Ama*

*Lady Saw*

**DONETTE**

## DANCEHALL DONETTE (cont'd from pg. 8)

**T**he lyrics of many dancehall songs focus on degrading women's sexuality and are usually sung by men. It is unusual for the sexual degradation to be done by a woman. However dancehall sensation Lady Saw represents a contradiction. While admitting to the lewdness of some of her lyrics, she says that there is another side to her art, a clean side. Born on July 12, this 24 year old deejay-singer is unapologetic about catering to an audience which seeks her out specifically for a treat of her most X-rated if controversial, musical expressions.

**IMANI:** Tell me about the controversy.

**LADY SAW:** There are two sides to Lady Saw. There's the conscious side and the other side; I'm good at any side. The X-rated stuff, what people call lewd is just because I say things plain while other people would beat around the bush. On the other side though, I have a lot of clean lyrics, like "The Lord is my Saviour," a new one called "Thank you Lord". But in the dancehall, people like when I perform X-rated things.

**IMANI:** Do people really come to the dancehall to hear slackness?

**LADY SAW:** Definitely! Like now, I'm not doing any slack tunes and people ask what happen, if Lady Saw turn christian.

**IMANI:** Give me an example of one of your lewd songs.

**LADY SAW:** There is "Stab out the Meat" which give a man the ratings... saying that he is a good performer in bed and the woman likes that. Some women want to say that but they are shy so I say it for them. Then there was "If the man Lef" which says that a man tells his friend he had to leave, because she wasn't any good in bed. What the song say is that if the man lef, a no fe we fault... and the girls loved me for that. When I am doing it though, I do it raw like

if the man lef  
a no my pussycat fault

Girls like me backing them up although I also back up the man dem.

**IMANI:** Is it the public that finds you most offensive or other artistes?

**LADY SAW:** It's not the artistes and not even the public. It was just a one man then two man. If journalists come to my show and then write up something bad, people react to what he is writing. Even when I'm not doing anything wrong, there's one particular person who writes a lot of bad things about me. Some journalists are paid to write good things about some people; we know a lot of things but we hold them down. There's Mutabaruka who fights against me. I can see with him because he is more of a cultural person.

I made a song for Carnival, a calypso which is called "Bad Rooster". It's about a cock that lived next door which wakes me up every morning before I should wake up. I tell my neighbour to give away that cock. It's wicked! It says there's a cock that's been living

right next door  
wakes me up every morning quarter  
to four  
sometimes I'm so weary  
my eyes get so sleepy  
but this cock won't stop nagging me

i lodged a complaint just the  
other day  
telling my neighbours to give that  
cock away  
but he was under my window before  
daybreak  
crowing and scratching inna mi place  
i say, Hilda remove you cock  
or else fight a go pop...

**IMANI:** Many people complain that the reggae music industry has declined with the rise of dancehall which happened after the passing of Bob Marley. Do you agree with this?

**LADY SAW:** Well, you have a lot of

reggae artistes still working like Bunny Wailer, Marcia Griffiths, Tony Rebel, Freddie McGregor, Dennis Brown, Brigadier Jerry, people who pushing reality and culture. It's just we the younger folks going on kinda... you know? The culture artistes balance off what we are saying. Some of we young people, we don't know that much and we didn't get anybody to teach us what goes down in Africa. If we had such knowledge we could write more cultural things. We need more education. You have to know that some artistes just don't have it up there. I didn't go to any high school but I figure out certain things and I learn from people to write certain lyrics, like the good ones.

If I could get someone to teach me more about history and so on, everything criss because I write my own lyrics.

**IMANI:** Given that most people in Jamaica are poor and most people who go to dancehall are from ghetto areas, how would you say women for example afford it?

**LADY SAW:** Well a working woman may be able to afford her outfit. Also nowadays, men have to give them ladies money because that's what the ladies a deal with. So a man wants his woman to go with him to the dancehall, him have to mek she look good.

**IMANI:** What is the name you use when you're not performing?

**LADY SAW:** My right name is Marion Hall. I was born in Port Maria, St. Mary. I grew up in Gallina, left from Gallina to Kingston and went back. Then I took up residence here (Kingston) because of the music business. I've four brothers, four sisters and I'm number five. My mother is still alive; she's here. My father is here also; he recently returned from abroad.

**IMANI:** How do they feel about you being in the music business?

**LADY SAW:** They're always proud of me. At first my father was a bit surprised; when he went abroad I wasn't into anything like this. As for my mother, she's always happy but if she hears like any controversy she gets worried. I told her no publicity is bad publicity.

**IMANI:** How did you get involved in the business?

**LADY SAW:** At the age of 15 I started singing at dancehalls and people would call me Female Saw. Then they started calling me Lady Saw; that name stuck. Then I tried the deejay thing one night and I got a lot of applause so I said I think this one is better. I started from there doing a lot of deejay songs.

**IMANI:** Have you had any formal training in singing?

**LADY SAW:** I used to go to church and sing on stage. Then I started trying out in the dancehall. The first one I worked at was in St. Mary; the name of the sound was Tyrant. Then I came to Kingston and tried on Little John sound called Romantics. Then I worked with Stereo One, Captain Barclay, Wickerman and Lieutenant Stitchie.

We always clashed together. I was always on top and then everybody said, this girl is something, you know. That's how I started. I can rap, I can do calypso, I can sing and I can deejay; I do everything. Any way they take me, they have to accept me.

**IMANI:** Tell me where you have toured.

**LADY SAW:** I've been to Canada about four times. I've been to New York, Miami, Japan, England, I've been around. Anywhere I go, people always request my return because of the performance. These are black and white people and they understand what I am saying and they love it. There was this white man who wanted to sign me into a company. But I wouldn't give up five years of my life with some company and can't earn enough to make me and my family comfortable.

**IMANI:** Are you satisfied with your management?

**LADY SAW:** Oh yes, Castro [Brown] is everything and he's always there. He and my boyfriend work together as a team. We used to quarrel at first like when I would be working but nothing would really be happening and you get confused but they always tell me ... Time. Just have patience, and it has paid off.

**IMANI:** Do you have children?

**LADY SAW:** No; I plan to but not right now. I have to be sure that the father is ready. He thinks that he is ready but to me he is not. I know he can afford it and that he will be there but that's not how I see life. I don't want to be living with a kid and the father is someplace else. I am more on the settle-down side. I am a big woman now; I'm twenty-four. He's everything a woman would desire but he has another woman.

**IMANI:** Are you the matey then?

**LADY SAW:** I don't see it like that because he spends most of his time with me but he's living with his woman so some nights he sleeps over. A lot of people don't know of him having another woman. I feel that he doesn't want to give up either of us. He says that I should give him some time but I have been waiting long enough. Sometimes I feel like leaving.

**IMANI:** If you were to put an experience like that in song, what would you advise the woman to do?

**LADY SAW:** I did one song about it... remember "*Work a Miracle?*" It was based on that because I was alone, he was home with that woman and I said I would like a man for myself which at the same time was him. This year I did another one which says

las year mi did a beg fi miracle,  
mi naw do dat no more,  
my man haffi choose between me  
an him gal  
or else go through the door  
tell him a new year dis year  
woman yuh naw share  
no mek him tell yuh fi try understand  
star yuh own show an  
run yuh program

"*Work a Miracle?*" went to number one both here and abroad. It worked because a lot of woman would really like to find a good man, or even say it but some of them too proud or too shy.

But yes, I'm saying this year we shouldn't share. I know I deserve better than that, you know.

**IMANI:** Why do you settle for less then?

**LADY SAW:** Well, to me... no offense to other man but I always think that he's the sweetest man God has ever made. I could say he's my life but he's not my life still. It's just the way how he treats me. He's always there for me; nobody could take me and turn me into a fool in the music business. He's doing recording and I record for him; he's the one who taught me certain things about the business. He's very nice.

**IMANI:** Do you think that it is something natural for the Jamaican man to have more than one woman?

**LADY SAW:** A lot of times I look into it and I think that there are different reasons. Some woman bruck man bad and give them luxury things so maybe a man thinks because of that he's obligated to her or if he leaves, he won't be living in that position anymore. Jamaican man as far as I'm concerned, most of them have two, three woman. Like is a modelling thing but in these times you can't be doing things like that due to AIDS and whatsoever. I'm serious about those things. I know it's not safe for a man to have two woman; a man may not even want to use him condom, you understand. Mi no inna dat.

**IMANI:** In terms of your life ambition, what would you like to achieve?

**LADY SAW:** Right now, I'm working on buying a house for me and my family. I'd like to get into the music too, producing myself and other artistes, maybe have a studio where I can do dub plates and so on. I love the music and I want to stay right in there. Sometimes I also feel I would like to have a store or beauty parlour, with professional people working there.

I'm a simple girl, sometimes moody. Like sometimes when I'm working in the studio and I keep on making mistakes I sometimes get moody and miserable like mi granny. Otherwise I'm cool, easy to get along with. People love Lady Saw. People usually say when they meet me that they didn't expect me to be like that,. Through all this I just pray for prosperity every day.

and the role which music plays in all of this. People think in the language and language influences the thinking; you're a product of your environment and yet you still help to influence and shape the direction of people's social reality within the environment.

People have a strong American orientation due to the socio-political and socio-cultural reality. This can be seen in dance, in the way people dress. There are agents who create an image of dancehall which says "as bare as you dare." Dancehall did not evolve out of that image. Women frock used to be wide enough for them to spin, ballroom style inna the dancehall.



Milton Williams

Yasus with a fan

***Humans gather at the dancehall in their hundreds and thousands; you can't ignore that as a social activist. You have to find ways and means, creatively, to communicate without prostituting whatever you stand for...***

But when you trace the history, you could always have dance inna di schoolroom. If it had continued in that healthy direction, all the church dem woulda take over; we coulda keep dance inna di church. So like how dance keep every week we woulda find a purpose for the church dem what lock up till Sunday. But based on the reality of social life, the political experience and certain other forces, the youth dem become alienated from the established institutions like the school.

The ghetto mentality is to protect anything

they see as their own but they didn't identify with the school or the establishment faith in that way. We therefore suffer the consequences as a nation. The emphasis in terms of the lyrics and male sexuality is on the genitals. A woman is perceived as an object on certain lower levels. A one don't use the psychology of suspense, they use the psychology of not leaving much to the imagination.

We as youth now, recognise seh dancehall is a place where people gather so we use it as a vehicle to carry a message. So, when certain things happen, we can do something positive to reflect them because we are oral historians. We do this because we don't want to add to the deterioration that is taking place. That is the real test of creativity and artistry, strength of character, purpose and assurance of your sense of direction.

**Sistren: So the dance hall experience couldn't be described as all bad then.**

YASUS: No! Because it's love and harmony that it originated out of and if it got misguided, it can be redeemed, cleansed and baptised. That's what we are all about. We naw seh dat it a go come perfect but at least we can come to a wholesome attitude

which will make you feel a sense of upliftment rather than degradation and aggression and confrontation. Our music is about finding who you are, what is your purpose, your relationship with God and the environment.

**Sistren: Given the commercial interest that is the overriding influence, who is responsible for the overall redirection in dancehall music?**

YASUS: I would say that Jah is the one with the master plan. We as instruments of the Father have to work according to how we are inspired. We want to also appeal to those in the media to use their influence to help in shaping the righteous direction of the music. We wouldn't like it to reach the stage where the parents can't talk to the children or the children to the parents. We also don't want to set up enmity between the police and the ordinary citizens.

What we are saying then is that we need tolerance. So we couldn't even go and crucify those people who we might say are behaving in a way which we consider contrary to our thinking. We have to use reasoning, scientific evidence, conscience and we moral conviction to try steer the

cont'd on pg. 20

moted the concept of indigenous development: that the particularities of each nation be taken into account in the designing of development programmes and projects.

The outcome of the 70s however was not as anticipated and the 80s came to be dubbed "... the lost decade for development". Jamaica for example abandoned and dismantled the achievements of the 70s: social welfare programmes were axed. Individualism and the pursuit of economics at all costs became the order of the day. The increasing dependence of the informal sector on imports from North America became the norm. This assimilation of things 'Northern' was accompanied by an increased adoption of alien cultural values and attitudes and the downgrading of our history and tradition.

A new development thrust had therefore to be assigned to the 90s. The objective is to redevelop what was maldeveloped over the last 30 years. The South is dismantling what they had not succeeded in doing in the 80s. All this under the guise of the free market, structural adjustment and privatization.

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*... who benefits from this globalization thrust? Who determines who is developed and by implication who is underdeveloped?*

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The fear of being left out has led to an obsession with competitiveness. Who can identify a leader from whatever political flavour or social stratum who

has not been urging us to "develop"? We must export or die; if we do not "develop" we will be lost in the technological race which is reducing the world to a tiny global village; we must gain entry to NAFTA etc. etc. But who benefits from this globalization thrust? Who determines who is developed and by implication who is underdeveloped?

For one to pursue this 'noble' goal of "development" one must conceive of oneself as "underdeveloped". This condition of "underdevelopment" implies the need to escape from an unacceptable position. It takes no student of psychology to understand the implications of thinking of one self as underdeveloped. It undermines your self confidence. One loses pride in ones own culture, and the logical pursuit becomes the need to escape. To embrace others experiences and dreams. In the final analysis the result is manipulating people into accepting norms set by the developed world - the West.

In a revised attempt at advocacy the United Nations has declared 1988 to 1997 the Decade for Cultural Development with UNESCO as lead implementing agency. UNESCO has defined culture very broadly. It includes artistic activities such as literature, music, art and dance, beliefs, values, attitudes, customs and social relations. It is everything which makes up the characteristics of a people or a community and gives each of us our cultural identity.

What the development community is saying is that "development" efforts which neglect peoples' way of life, their culture, produce very little if any positive results. The Decade is therefore aimed at highlighting the need to place **Culture** at the Centre of Devel-

opment; asserting and enhancing cultural identities; promoting international cultural co-operation and reinforcing the acceptance of cultural diversity in the interest of international peace and understanding.

The urgency for action is that the basis of the cultural lives of peoples is being threatened. Threatened by the promotion of a monoculture in the form of western values, the effects of advertising and the media, the sameness of tastes and lifestyles induced by standardized production methods, the erosion of certain traditional values and the difficulty of replacing them with new ones. In the face of this onslaught many societies are increasingly concerned that they have to preserve, defend and promote their cultural identities. Also an increasing number of participants in the development community are placing greater emphasis on the cultural dimension of development.

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*The pursuit of indigenous cultural values and norms means to maintain diversity. To accept one's limitations and learn to cope within the means available to do so.*

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The avenues for transmitting cultural values into development are numerous and include the family, education system, information networks, institutions of public life etc. and need to be preserved.

But what would happen if **Culture** as defined here were pursued to its logical conclusion? The pursuit of indigenous

## DEVELOPMENT (cont'd from pg. 13)

cultural values and norms means maintaining diversity. To accept one's limitations and learn to cope within the means available to do so. It means formulating and implementing alternative, creative responses to providing human needs. Were this done then "development" as it has traditionally been advocated and practised would have to end. The reason is that there is an inherent contradiction between what the UN is advocating as development and what has traditionally been imposed by the 'developed' world on the so-called 'underdeveloped' world.

Perhaps, this is the reason the decade for Culture has gotten so little exposure and support in its own right. No additional funding has been provided for UNESCO to undertake Decade projects. And in several instances traditional projects are being designated Decade Projects thankfully, or have added the cultural dimension to their focus. Here in Jamaica the 1991 Workshop on the use of popular theatre for community development sponsored by the OAS was one such project. Another was "The Arts of the Caribbean", an International Summer School which was organised by the Institute of Jamaica and the University of the West Indies.

Participating countries were Trinidad, Guyana, Barbados, Dominica, St. Kitts, along with the University of Michigan, University of California - Los Angeles; Florida A&M University and Jamaica. Funding was provided by UNESCO. Courses offered included the Culture, History and Politics of Jamaica, Caribbean Culture and Society, West Indian Literature and Caribbean Archeology. Presenters were from the Uni-

versity of the West Indies, Cuba, Cultural Training Centre, African Caribbean Institute of Jamaica (ACIJ) and Sistren Theatre Collective.

UNESCO advocated the setting up of National Commissions involving both the private and public sectors to oversee decade activities. In addition these Commissions would have cultural exchanges between developed and developing countries. This too has not borne the expected fruit. Barbados is the only regional country which set up a Commission but that too has faltered mainly because of limited human resources and funds.

In the pipeline is the establishment of an information network with UNESCO and the Cultural Division of the CARICOM Secretariat. The main component will be the provision of Culture Kits for schools, the focus being on Caribbean development through culture. A TV programme dubbed Disease, Culture and Communication is also to be undertaken. UNESCO has also commissioned a six part series of videos called "Vanishing Jamaica" which will soon be marketed by Phase Three Productions Limited.

This low level support should not be surprising because if the full potential of peoples defending and promoting their cultural identities, maintaining their cultural diversity, preserving their cultural norms, history and tradition were to be pursued and realized the death of the Western concept of development, which has been in existence for the last 40 years, would be inevitable.

So what then is the alternative? Difficult though it may seem societies need to relentlessly defend the channels for transmitting cultural values. They need to begin to examine strategies of survival outside of those defined and perpetuated by the market system; stop the pursuit of

wants and keep needs within the possibility of what is available; in their interaction with the environment set standards aimed at conserving and preserving it. This approach is not advocating isolation but communication and sharing based on mutual respect of one another's culture.

More workers and policymakers in the development industry need to think about what their contribution to this process called "development" really means and the extent to which their desired goals can be achieved with current methods and techniques.

The main sources for the writing of this article were *A practical guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development*, 1988-97, UNESCO, 1987, France and *The Development Dictionary; A Guide to Knowledge as Power* edited by Wolfgang Sachs. I would encourage all persons involved with the development community to read this book for knowledge, for insight, for reflecting on, and be inspired to action.



# DANCING AROUND DEVELOPMENT

by Dr. Carolyn Cooper

Some argue that dancehall culture in terms of lyrics, dance and fashion partially and positively expresses our African heritage and tradition *and its transformation under slavery*. In addition the organisation, the involvement of multi-talented individuals in the production of a dancehall event represents a collective approach to the solution of community problems. At the same time that the "culture" draws on the people's history it *incorporates* the technological sophistication of the international pop music industry. The pertinent question therefore becomes ... *Can* these skills be harnessed towards improving the conditions of people's lives, towards "development"? Dr. Carolyn Cooper *looks at the* people's experience in their struggle to find strategies of *survival*, where rewards *do not necessarily match* efforts. *She does this first through an examination of local proverbs* and how they are mirrored in current dancehall lyrics. The "culture", she argues, provides a model of "development" which *illustrates the* multi-layered ways in which the *very idea* of "development" *needs to be considered*.

"Development" is a tricky business. Some development workers know how hard it is to change long established social systems. That is what George Beckford was talking about in his book "Persistent Poverty". He showed the problem at the heart of the development issue: Poverty persists, and the measures aimed at reducing poverty, implemented by both national and international development agencies make the situation worse rather than better.

Further, in the international development industry relatively little attention is paid to

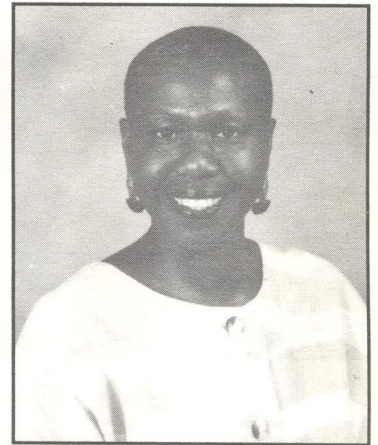
how local people organise themselves to cope with life. Little if any concern is shown for their methods of development. So the foreign experts, manuals and ideology which come to development projects are alien to the people they hope to assist. In addition they bring relatively little cold cash and hard currency.

What then are the development needs of the people? The vast majority of Jamaicans are not "undeveloped". We are materially poor. Material poverty and "underdevelopment" are not at all the same thing. We are conscious of what makes the good life and willing to make sacrifices to achieve it. However, we are not prepared to work out our "soul case" for nothing.

## LESSONS OF HISTORY

Societies like ours that were founded on the exploitation of "free" slave labour continue to bear the burdens of our terrible history. For a stubborn "hard core" of the Jamaican people, work must yield reasonable rewards or it will not be done willingly. That is the legacy of slavery. It is a fundamental reality that development experts must take into account. There are several Jamaican proverbs that give clues to the origin of what appears to be an entrenched, counter productive work ethic that is obviously the by-product of the slavery experience.

The following pair of proverbs make it clear that work simply will not be done willingly by some tricksters: "yu neba si emti bag tan op; yu neba si ful bag ben" [you never see an empty bag stand up; you never see a full bag bend]. The hungry worker is too empty to stand, the well-fed worker is too full to bend. This proverb which has German, Italian, Haitian and Martinican variants suggests that the avoidance of work



Dr. Carolyn Cooper

is not peculiar to any one "race". It seems to be a universal response to perceived exploitation.

In circumstances where workers feel that reward is not equal to effort, very little energy will be expended. Thus: "daag se bifuor im plaant yam fi luk laik maskita fut, im satisfai fi ton bega" [dog says that rather than planting yam which will turn out to be no bigger than a mosquito's shank, he will be satisfied to be a beggar].

Since "bakra wok neva don" [the white man's work is never done] there is no point in attempting to do it. In the eyes of the slave, the benefits of labour accrue only to the immoral, exploitative "other" - the bakra/white man owner of labour. The slave, the "emancipated" indentured labourer and the modern, unemployed "worker" alike, all recognize their alienation from the fruits of their own labour.

Conversely, there is a cluster of Jamaican proverbs that advocate the necessity of work, even in situations where the positive outcome of effort is not immediately evident. The proverb "wan wan kuoko ful baaskit"

cont'd on pg. 23

# LOUISE FRASER BENNETT...

## Against slackness, lewdness and gun lyrics... but

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by Partick Smikle

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*"I don't manage artistes who go slack, lewd or outrageous."*

**T**he statement is firm and definitive. The speaker is Louise Fraser-Bennett, former political and community activist... now President of the Sound System Association of Jamaica and manager of "...a host of dancehall entertainers."

To leave the statement there would be to quote her out of context and maybe oversimplify and distort her position on the dancehall debate.

The mother of six children, Louise Fraser-Bennett feels that popular entertainers should recognize the influence they have on the society in general and the children in particular. "Children live what they learn," she declares, "and what they are living is dancehall." Hence her "constant fight against slackness, lewdness [and] gun lyrics."

But there are two problems here.

The first has to do with the public support

which entertainers singing these lyrics get so easily. The way Louise sees it, "... people who are against slackness, lewdness and gun lyrics have an obligation to support DJs who provide alternative entertainment. Those DJs need to know that they can make a living from a clean act."

At the time of our interview Louise was busy organising a weekend all women DJ show.

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*People who believe in  
consciousness must  
support it financially  
so that artistes will be  
able to go clean and stay  
clean and still earn.*

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"We are promoting a conscious party and we not getting any support because people are saying its not going to work. People who believe in consciousness must support it financially so that artistes will be able to go clean and stay clean and still earn. As far as the entertainers are concerned, if you go

clean and stay clean, yu gwine dead fe hungry." They think... "Its only slackness and nastiness that sells. Sex, violence and guns."

Although we were trying to keep the discussion away from dealing with individual artistes I couldn't resist asking her about Lady Saw, whose performance at Sunsplash '93 created a furore about slackness on stage.

"Lady Saw is pressured into a corner to do what she is doing. Because of the level of consciousness that Lady Saw is exposed to. You can't expect better. You can't blame the woman. Its their environment."

So what about Carlene and her dancehall models?

"Those girls are dancers. Its [the skimpy costumes and the sexually suggestive gyrations] an act. Me know them personal lifestyle and if them lifestyle was of prostitution me would a denounce them. But me no see nothing wrong with them right now. Me know them personally and them more modest than some a de people dem you see a wear long dress and cover them entire body." Which brought us to the second problem.

What is slackness? What is acceptable and what is not?

"People have sex. People make love. Maybe you call that slackness. That is your interpretation. But I don't want to see it happening live on stage. Sometimes its not what is said. It is how it is said."

My fight is when a DJ say, 'Hold down a gal and rape her because she love the rape.' That is my slackness."

And what about gun lyrics?

"What some DJs talk about is what they experience. A man tek a gun an shot John Brown. I'm not against gun lyrics if a man a talk about what really happen. The average DJ is talking what them see. Facts that can be proven in court. Some people in the society don't want to hear about that experience. The society don't want to hear because it sound outrageous. Its mirroring on them."

"That's not my fight. My fight is when a DJ tell a youth sey him must tek up a gun and shoot a man."

To illustrate her point she turns to Ninja man, He is to some dancehall fans the '**Gun pon tee Don Gorgon**'.

"I'm responsible for the creation of a Ninjaman. [But] Ninjaman take a different turn in his career that I'm not responsible for. He sort of degenerated himself in the system. But all bad things must come to an end. So he is trying to recuperate, to be somebody that people can look up to."

Louise boasts about getting Ninjaman to endorse the safe sex and condom use campaign being promoted by the Aids Committee.

**We turn specifically to women... women DJs... women in the dancehall.**

She declares "Music has no gender." But she feels women can play an important role in the industry, if they have an agenda.

"You set your agenda regardless of whether you're a man or a woman. Once you have an agenda which you set for yourself, nobody can cross that boundary."

# ALL FEMALE DJ SHOWDOWN in Concert



**Sister Nancy!**



**Lady G!**



**Lady Mackre**



**Lady Ann!**



**Angie Angel!**

And she uses her own career as an example.

"**The roles that I play?** I've entered into various levels of the business. Sometimes I have to tek man off a stage physically, because I'm also a stage manager and stage coordinator. But that is just my determination. I'm not the sort of person you can trample or walk on. I defend what I believe in."

Of the women artistes she manges she is particularly proud of Sister Nancy (Muma Nancy to some fans) a DJ she thinks is in the best position to prove that a clean act can also be a commercially successful act. She also has praises for Lady G, not one of her acts.

Asked about role models she picks only Rita Marley and Judy Mowatt from the country's list of successful female entertainers.

Why? As she tells it her position in the industry gives her the 'privilege' of seeing people's private lives, not just their public image.

So she looks outside the industry for additional role models. And again only two come to mind; coordinator of the Jamaica Council for Human Rights, Flo O'Connor and Garveyite, academic and teacher Sister Miriam Semad.

**And what if Louise Fraser-Bennett had the power to set the agenda for women in entertainment, women in the dancehall?**

"The primary thing I would encourage is modesty in attire. Also a sense of responsibility... responsibility. Dem must hold themselves as the mothers of the nation. Whatever happen in the society they must know that it is fully their responsibility. So they have to be careful of what they do and what they say. Be more mothers than entertainers. Be caring, and in caring, be sharing. See the nation as their children and handle the children of the nation as the fruits of their labour."

*Patrick Smikle is the Senior Account Executive at Communication Services Ltd., an advertising and public relations firm. He is also a freelance journalist.*

# GLAMOROUS GLITTEROUS

by Melody Walker

**Belinda** struts into the dancehall session with a posse of four other girls. Her glittery, green sequin outfit holds the attention of the patrons at the House of Leo.

Her dress is ultra short, it barely falls below her hip. Her midriff is bare and the top of her dress is joined by a thin strip of cloth at the back. There is multiple action in the cleavage area, and the long sleeves are slit all the way down to the wrists.

**Belinda's** friends are coolly dressed in spandex bell-bottom, tights or bell-bottom jeans, skin tight body blouses and chunk heel shoes. They all sport the latest hairstyles; the "Toni Braxton", crunch, finger wave and even the very ordinary "paste-down". They walk confidently through the lines of onlookers which formed spontaneously, on the left and the right.

Five minutes later, a blond-wig "browning" walks in wearing a slinky red dress that seems to cover so little. The patrons scramble again to catch a glimpse of the latest arrival. This goes on for the first half of the night, until the last of the "modelling poses" arrive.

## OUR NICE TIME

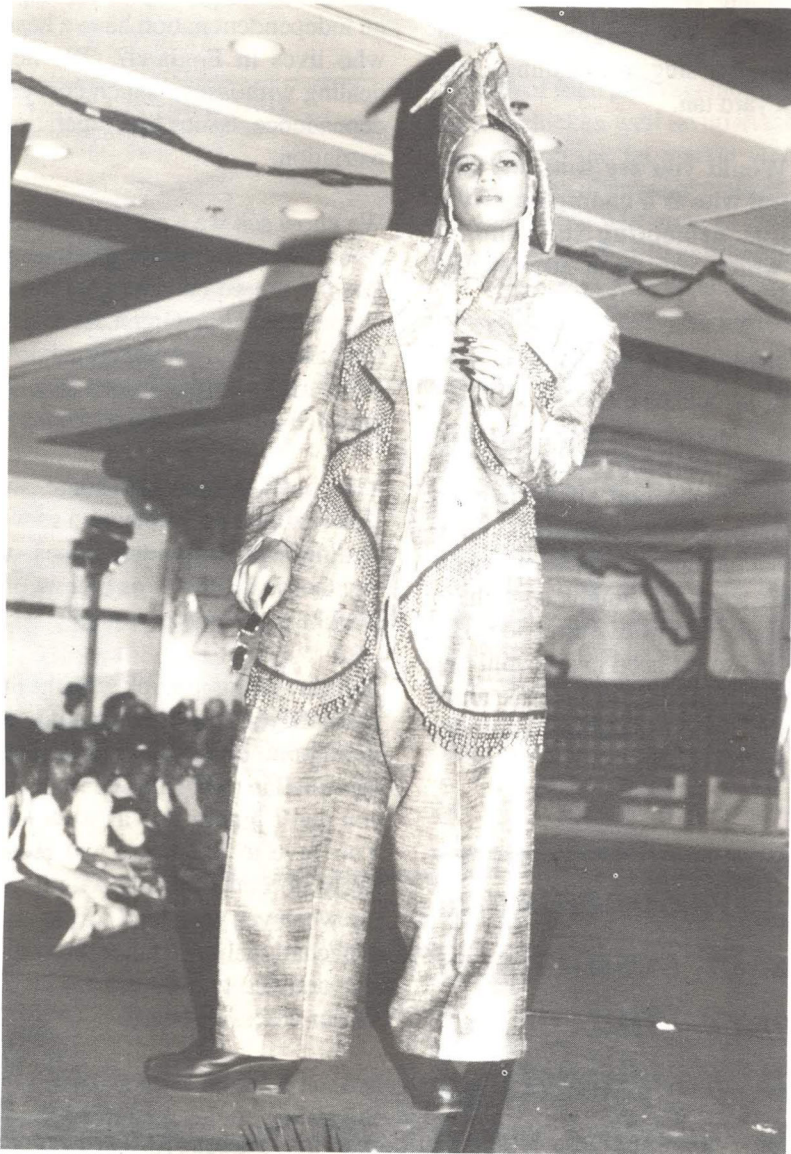
While the highpoint of the dance is usually the popular set that is playing or the sound system clash; beneath the surface is the excitement that the females bring to the dance.

Women who go to dancehalls regularly are criticized for the way they dress, dance, their ecstatic response to the slackness, hatred and violence in the lyrics of the deejays. These women however, believe that they are misunderstood. They feel that those who criticize them are intolerant and class prejudiced.

*There seems to be an Africanesque spirit in the X-rated expressions of dancehall fashion... especially the Yuroba culture, (which) has been nakedness... dancehall, the jewelry and clothes is part of Africa's explosion in the diaspora.*



# DANCE HALL FASHION



Milton Williams

"Dancehall fashion is not vulgar to me, It is just the style. If you going to the dancehall you have to go with the crowd." Luckily dancehall goers do not measure themselves by other people's opinion of them.

## VERY POSITIVE

According to Ms. Stein, the fashion in dancehall is very positive. Interestingly, though she personally does not like the nakedness, at the same time she does not think it is negative either. There seems to be an Africanesque spirit in the X-rated expressions of dancehall fashion. L'Antoinette points out that the African experience, especially the Yoruba culture, has been nakedness.

Is Dancehall fashion therefore a revival and expression of our African heritage? And is it therefore o.k. for the nakedness we see in dancehall fashion?

L'Antoinette is not sure whether it is, but she feels that dancehall, the jewelry and clothes is part of Africa's explosion in the diaspora.

"I would like to go back to Brathwaite and his theory of the explosion of Africa like a capsule in the Caribbean. We have always had an [African] sub-culture in Jamaica. It also showing itself in a very vivid way through dancehall, its fashion and everything else that goes with it."

However she believes that it will not be the African aesthetics of dancehall fashion that will bring about any cross-culturation and acceptance of dancehall fashion within the wider Jamaican society, but perhaps the appearance of dancehall queen Carlene at more uptown events like Jamaica Carnival.

Even some dancehall patrons, are against the 'nakedness'. One lady thinks she is too fat to dress like that, and others say that fat

*cont'd on pg. 34*

"Dancehall is ghetto girl's entertainment... our nice time," **Precious** says defensively. "It is our culture, our way of expressing ourselves, so nobody should care how we do it."

**Belinda** agrees with her friend's statement, and adds that going to the dancehall makes them feel good about themselves.

According to **L'Antoinette Stein**, Director of **L'Acadco Dance Company** women's most significant contribution to the dancehall culture is the fashion.

"Dancehall fashion started from in the '70s and has been evolving through time and has finally exploded", she says. [The women] did not get up one morning and dressed that way. They have been taking fashion from all over the world and created their own."

Sections of the society are outraged at the dancehall fashions. They see the blond wigs, B-riders, G-strings, sheer skirts, body building suits and bustiers as immoral, decadent and ludicrous.

A pretty 20-year old dancehall fan responds.

## DEFEND THE CULTURE (cont'd from pg. 12)

people them in a direction that say, what happen to we pride and dignity. This is a consciousness to know that you are valuable and that you are a child of God, with a purpose and worth. People then will deal with you according to how you deal with yourself. We want to live that and try to manifest that both on and offstage.

**Sistren: Does dub poetry have any kind of coincidence with the phenomenon of dancehall music in Jamaica?**

MUTA: Well, the deejays are poets too because poetry is the rhythmic movement of words. With this definition of poetry, it's just that you have some emphasizing one thing and a next set emphasizing another thing.

The deejays basically claim that they are emphasizing what is going on inna fi dem area; the dub poets dem more emphasizing global thinking. Rather than mirroring the system, it is instead washing off the dirt. Like the man who looks in the mirror and sees the dirt, rather than adding more dirt, he goes and wash it off. But with the deejays, it's like when they look and see the dirt, they go ahead and put more dirt.

**Sistren: Are you making a value judgement on the art of dancehall then?**

MUTA: Not really but what we a seh is that it useless fe a man just reflect what inna him society and naw motivate the consciousness and conscience of the people dem fe do something about it. Dancehall as it used to be in days gone by and dancehall now is not the same thing. Dem might have been using the same ways but is not the same thing. Dancehall now is a culture; before it wasn't a culture. What you used to have is Rasta influencing the reggae music but reggae wasn't a culture; it was Rasta that was the culture. Nowadays, dancehall is the culture. It come wid clothes, a way of talking, an attitude, a kind of music, a kind of lifestyle.

YASUS: Although my music would be played in the dancehall, it would not be considered as mainstream as we would like although that's coming. We even do specials for sound systems. And because we

are defending a positive vibe, we will still chant out against those defending negative vibes. You also have certain sound systems that not defending certain vibes. They will even refuse to play certain types of music. They would prefer to play music that them children, parents, sisters and brothers will like to listen to. We recognise then that when certain ones sing certain things, that is how dem yard tan.

**Sistren: Would you see someone like Buju Banton who is a champion of the Dancehall as promoting the kind of slackness which you seem so strongly opposed to?**

YASUS: Even though BUJU do certain songs which I would characterise as slack, I wouldn't call him a promoter of slackness as such; he does many songs which we can categorize as being good. Buju is also obviously making a transformation which shows that he recognises that he has to do songs which teach the youths something and push people in a positive direction. His works will tell so we need to give him fair opportunity and support as an influential youth who has good intentions and who people love.

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*... the governments and people in positions of influence and power should understand that now is the time when they should recognise talent and creativity as essential human resources, the greatest assets of the nation, and channel it in a certain way.*

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What we are saying then is that even the governments and people in positions of influence and power should understand that now is the time when they should recognise talent and creativity as essential human resources, the greatest assets of the nation, and channel it in a certain way. What happen to our self-identity? Why can't we create we own destiny? Why should we as an independent nation have a head of state who lives in England? We need to be dealing with issues which concern our independence, issues like reparation and repatriation.

We know seh we a get deh because we see where we as a fraternity - man like Tony Rebel who we call the guerilla, man like Garnet Silk, Uton Green, Everton Blender, Deutoronomy, Sugar Black, Adefunde (formerly Andrew Priest) Luciana, dem man deh a forces to be reckoned with.

You haffi know seh stage show and dancehall have a connection so we not just dealing with individual vibes, we work together in harmony as a crew of artistes. It's like a campaign ground.

You have to keep a link with the dancehall; you haffi recognise seh the human element is very important. Humans gather at the dancehall in their hundreds and thousands; you can't ignore that as a social activist. You have to find ways and means, creatively, to communicate without prostituting whatever you stand for, to address the dancehall reality. Rather than being a passive activist, you should get involved and let our voices be heard.

We get a lot of support from people like Sugar Minott, Sister Judy Mowatt, Sister Elise Kelly, Bagga Brown, Dennis Howard, G.G. Taylor, Umojah Benneniah, Neville Willoughby, Andrea Williams, Ritchie B... people who understand what we are doing. We know that it will happen because we try to balance ourselves in such a way that we can be entertaining, pleasing to the ear and the soul and at the same time saying something helpful that people can relate to. It's a trinity message, physical, mental and spiritual. Any imbalance creates frustration and anger... it's a wholistic approach.

That's why we call it a baptism.

# JUST ANOTHER DAY FOR MARVA BROWN

by Verna Lee Davis-Daly

**L**ord, its only three a.m. and I am awake, unable to sleep. Miss Mary hungry cock don't choose any where else to crow but under my room window. One of these days I going to put him to rest, real old nuisance.

The little room is so hot, and I can't even let a little cool breeze in for fear of my life. Next thing you know that bad man them push gun through the window and shoot us. What a life. If anybody did tell me that 40 years ago... But wait! Today is my birthday. July 12, 1952, a hot Saturday, market day when everybody passing with donkey load and basket load, full to the brim with

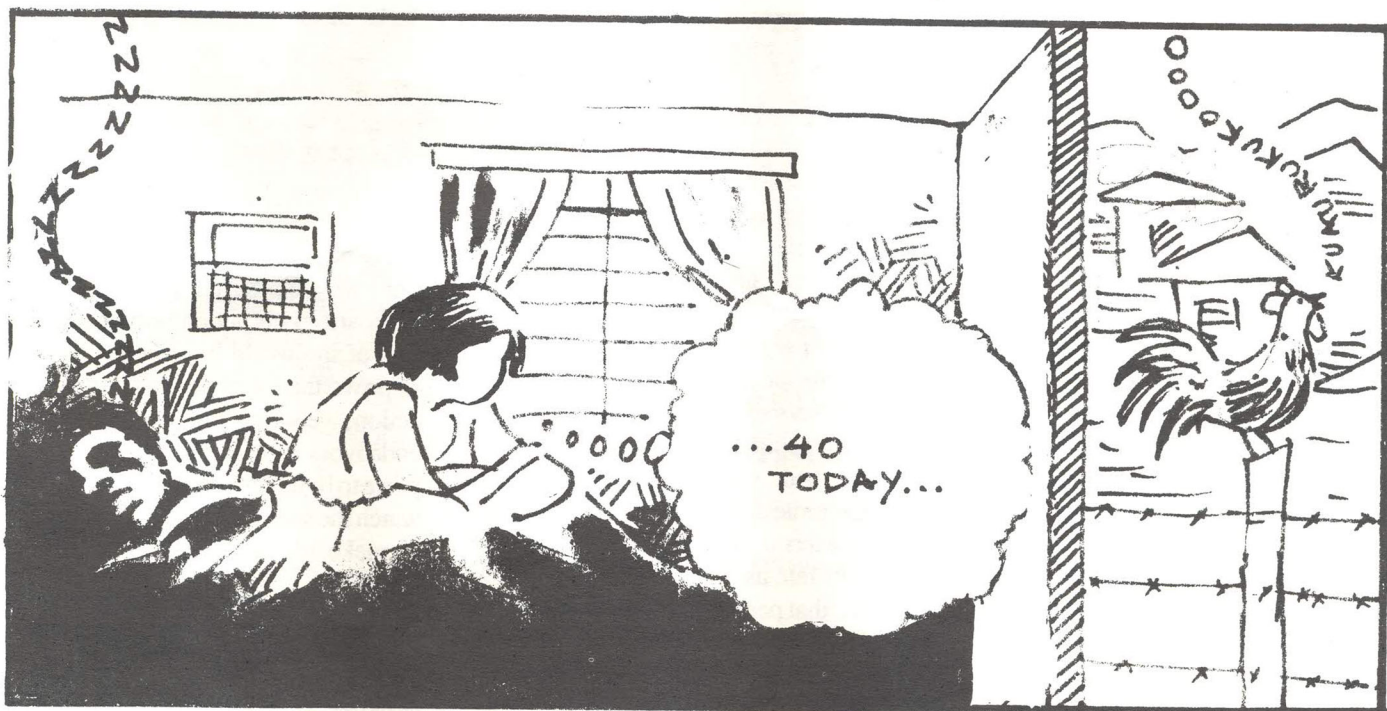
all kinds of food and vegetables. Even one and two chicken well tie up in the pudding pan them on the fat market woman them head. Mama always joke about me being born when she was gone to market. Yes, July 12, the sixth of 12 children, the middle one. Nobody ever seemed to have the time for me, so I always just keep to myself. That is how I have been going through life all by myself.

I left country at the age of 14, a little after I finished school. Mama never had the money to send me to high school, and Papa never care, so I had to go on my own and try to make life. Boy oh boy! The room hot for true. Let me just take a chance and crack the louvre over my head. It's almost 4:00 o'clock and first bus just pass, and me hear one and two people passing, so I can catch little fresh morning breeze now. Aah... that

feel little better, the mosquito them going make me go up gum tree. When is not one thing is the other. What to do.

Yes, is 40 years now that me on this earth, and what me have to show for it? A domestic job of 26 years, three children for two different fathers, a one room concrete nag (thank God for that) and a little bank book that I hide under the mattress. You can't trust people nowadays. Only the big girl Nacresha know where it is, in case of anything. I even put her name in it, but I don't make her know, next thing she think that me rich and stop study her book. She not bad at all she have good brain. Must be take after her father the ole wucklis Fanso.

Me and that boy was friends from school, everything was fine until I get pregnant with Necresha. The man just left me high



and dry at the tender age of 19. Is a good thing that the people I was working with were kind and understanding, plus I did come to them straight from the country. So it was almost like I grow in them hands. I never got a penny from that man, anyway me never dead. I had my nice little brown skin baby girl. Thank God Necresha is 21 years old now and going to C.A.S.T. She is doing business something or the other and is in the final year. Thank you Jeestas, them say "maga cow is bull momma". I suppose I have a lot to be thankful for.

The other two children not doing too bad. They not as bright as Necresha. The boy Glenville is 15 years old and the other girl Jesca is 10 years old. The two last one them is the same father. Gladstone is him name.

But I wonder why my mind just decide to run on all these things that happen so long ago? Is what time now? Oh, just 4:30. I have half hour more to reflect and rest. I wasn't dunce in school at all, so I know a few big words, and them meaning. Is just that after I start to have the children them, there was no time to further my education. Anyway I read a lot of Miss Joan book them when I am at work. Miss Joan is my mistress, a nice high colour, pretty hair, upper St. Andrew girl. I used to work with her parents before they die. Nice people them now I work for her. She is married to a tall very handsome, very cool Black man.

They have their own business and all, no children though.

Sometimes I wish I was Miss Joan. So much nice clothes and shoes, plenty money, a big house with nice furniture and pretty curtains, and a nice man who give her everything she want. You must see the car that she drive. She drive me in it sometimes when I work late. It cold like any office and have in nice music. When you driving in it is like you floating on a cloud. Some woman really lucky, anyway all of us can't have the same thing.

Then the one Gladstone him decide to start come round very often these days. Him even start to drop a sleep in me bed, claim that him tired, just to get an excuse to sleep all night. But if him think that me is any fool him is sadly mistaken. I make sure that I stop myself from having children 5 years now, but I still tell him to use a condom. Him is looking for a good time, so am I, but my life is precious. I don't know where him putting himself when him out on the street. The AIDS thing not easy. God Forbid.

You know that when I was little, and my mother was my age, me could never think that she and my father still have sex. Aah... sah... and look on me now, 40 years old and still kicking up a storm. Although Gladstone him not so hot on the sex thing at all, but I just make a whole heap a noise, and go on

like is the best I ever had. Good thing the children them spending time in the country and Necresha spending weekend with one of her uptown friends. Sometimes for a peaceful life you just have to make them feel good. Him better make good now, because when the children them come back none of that. The place too small, I have to set a good example for them, especially the two girls. If him want to have good times him will have to add on another room.

Is almost time to get up now, hear how the Gladstone him a draw long snore. Real thief bait. I don't even think that him know that today is my birthday, but wait. Necresha did call me at work on Friday and say that I must check the bread pan to see if bread was there. Is how she interested in bread all of a sudden so? When I get up I will look as the two long belly ones coming from country this evening. Well the weekend wasn't all that bad. Gladstone him give me \$500. Him is either sick, soon dead, or him win race horse. Anyway I thank him, it will help with lunch money and extra lesson fee for the first week of the new school term.

Well is 5:00 o'clock. Gladstone! Gladstone! Get up. I wonder why him rolling over and stretching out him hand them for? I have no time for that, I have to work for my children. Birthday or no birthday. Just another day for Marva Brown.

**CONT'D IN NEXT ISSUE**

## CHOOSE TO MAKE HISTORY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

Aids is striking many women as well as men [at the global level], and some experts are predicting that, by the end of the decade, as many as 60 percent of all cases will be among women... When one understands that in most developing countries women are the primary food producers and do two-thirds of all labour worldwide, one begins to understand how devastating AIDS is in its global context. The second striking feature of the global context is its sheer magnitude. By the end of this decade, 40 million people will have been infected by HIV, [the virus that causes AIDS]. Ten million will have AIDS. Five million children will be infected by perinatal transmission, and at least the same number will be orphans, having lost both parents to AIDS.

By the end of this Decade there is a good possibility that the first therapeutic vaccine will be on the market, perhaps the first preventive vaccine, and not long afterwards a cure for AIDS will be found. If history is any guide, [Western] society — once we have discovered those vaccines or cures — will move very quickly to secure the safety of our own populations. Once that has been accomplished, we will promptly forget about the issue and in the process abandon three-quarters of the world's population to meet their fate as best they can... My proposal is... that people living with AIDS and with HIV, and their organizations, call on governments and multinational organizations to delay the release of any new vaccine or cure for AIDS until three conditions

can be met; that the drug or vaccine be affordable worldwide, and that it be accessible worldwide, and it be available worldwide... In taking this action, we would send a powerful message to people living with HIV and AIDS in developing countries that we will not allow the lifeboat to leave until we are assured that everyone will be on board. This action will be historic. The rich of the world have never sacrificed to improve the lot of the poor. If we take this action, we will create a model for all other endeavors to make the world a more just place to live. We can choose to stand by and watch the sweep of history or we can choose to make history. Let us choose to make history.

*Excerpts from speech by the late Jon Gates, former coordinator of the Inter-Agency Coalition on AIDS and Development, a branch of the Canadian Council on International Cooperation.*

*(International Dateline, February, 1993)*

[one by one, one coco at a time, the basket is filled" validates small increments of effort that ultimately result in the accomplishment of some fully satisfying objective. A similar sentiment is expressed in the proverb, "pieshent man raid danki" [a patient man rides on a donkey]. The ride may be slow, but it's sure.

An interesting proverb that directly challenges the passivity of the proverbial dog who would rather look than work is 'lang fut a sunhat kyaan pie red herin taks.' "Long feet" - an image of idle stretching-out-of-the-body in the heat of the day - cannot earn the income required to live in an economic system where essential goods are taxed.

The competing value systems that are encoded in proverbs speak to the wisdom of the people's experience in their struggle to find strategies of survival, in situations where rewards do not necessarily match the effort. After all "pus an daag doan av di siem lok" [the cat and the dog don't have the same fortune].

Indeed, even where the labourer is selfemployed, there is at times still a sense of victimization, and thus their need to be aggressive. For example, Louise Bennett gives voice to self-employed working-class women, mostly small-scale higglers, who often verbally abuse their potential customers as a kind of defense mechanism. For example, in "Candy Seller."

Come Lady buy nice candy mam?  
Which kine yuh want mam, pepper-mint?  
Tank yuh man. Kiss me neck!  
One no mo' farden bump she buy!  
Wat a red-kin ooman mean!  
Koo har foot eena de wedge-heel boot,  
Dem favah submarine.  
Ah we she dah-tun back fah? She  
Musa like fe hear me mout  
Gwan, all like yuh should'n walk a day,  
Yuh clothes fava black-out,  
Me kean pick up a big sinting  
Like yuh so draw dat blank.  
Afa me no deh a war, me naw  
Colleck no German tank.<sup>1</sup>

This remarkable sales technique - aggressive verbal intimidation of prospective customers - seems to be a self-protective strategy for the worker who feels constantly under threat.

The new breed of internationally travelled female higglers, ICIs [Informal Commercial Importers] have far more economic power than earlier higglers and so have a greater sense of psychological power. There is thus less of a need to attack customers and sabotage the economic system in which they now have an interest.

The respect that Bennett commands for her vociferous higglers and the messages of the proverbs have their modern day versions in the regard that many male DJ's have for their female fans, many of whom represent the new class of productively self-employed higglers. For example, Johnny P's "Gyal Man" celebrates the upward social mobility of enterprising women like those cunning characters Louise Bennett impersonates, who have ambitiously removed themselves from traditional drudgery: "Houl op yu hed, kaa yu naa skowa piipl pat/Houl op yu hed kaa yu av ambishan/Jomp about kaa yu ful af protenshal (sic)" [Hold up your head, you don't scour other people's pots/ Hold up your head because you have ambition/ Jump about because you're full of potential].

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*... the dancehall becomes the stage on which women and men act out rituals from release from historical roles of oppression.*

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In Johnny P's song the dancehall becomes the stage on which women and men act out rituals which release them from historical roles of oppression. The scouring of other

people's pots is the sign of entrapment in the exploitative domestic labour market. Working-class women, released from traditional gender roles, are invited by the DJ to "jump about" because their potential can be fulfilled.

Historically, "development" in a slave society was, essentially, convincing the slave that s/he possessed an inborn human capacity to make the best of a very bad situation. In the contemporary period, development means understanding the past in order to use its lessons to determine appropriate strategies of social transformation.

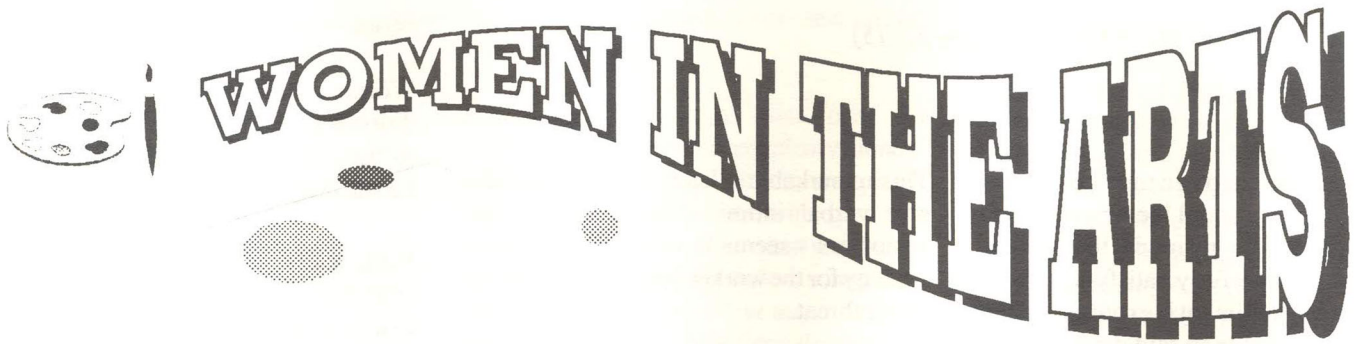
### THE ECONOMICS OF THE DANCEHALL

Given the history of exploitation of human resources in Jamaica - and the people's determination to resist this process, it is easy to understand why so many Jamaican youth want to become DJs. The dance hall is a social and economic space in which effort is abundantly rewarded. With raw talent and the efficient marketing skills of a sophisticated music industry, anybody, literally, can become a Buju Banton or a Lady Patra.

The evolution of the dancehall sector of the economy in Jamaica provides a model of "development" which clearly takes into account indigeneous cultural norms inspired by African history and tradition and its transformation under slavery. In addition the openness of the culture of the dancehall to the technological sophistication of the international pop music industry is evidence of a pragmatic flexibility that is entirely compatible with the reproduction of local cultural values.

The clear evidence of the potential of this sector to contribute significantly to economic development is demonstrated by the belated collaboration of private sector financial institutions in the attempted development of a venture capital fund for the reggae music industry. Also the recent decision of the Government to allow concessionary rates of duty on imports for the music industry is further evidence of the national recognition of the viability of this sector.

cont'd on pg. 32



# WOMEN IN THE ARTS

## Potting is an inspiration to the soul

"... it is hard work... it is therapeutic. It is an inspiration to the soul." It is not something that you will get rich quick off. You can make money out of it, but not overnight.

These are the inspired words of Jean Taylor-Bushay, potter for 25 years. First female graduate of the Jamaica School of Art (now The Edna Manley School for the Visual Arts) where she was a student between 1965 and 1969. After graduation she worked part-time as a potter until 1975 when she started her own studio and has since worked "full-time at my profession".

Jean's studio is located at her home but she started out at the first JIDC complex on Marcus Garvey Drive. "When I started potting as a business there was no one else doing it and that was great. Then Jean suffered the fate of many small businesses. In the 1980s everybody started flying off to



*Jean Taylor-Bushay, potter for 25 years, being interviewed by JBC's Entertainment Report host at an exhibition.*

Miami to buy the 99 cents cups and the 50 cents mugs and it became quite difficult for me as sales were reduced. But I didn't want to give up my pottery so I moved my studio to my home thus immediately reducing my overheads.

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***"I went to the Art School out of mere curiosity... I saw the ceramic department and that was it... that was it!"***

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And who is responsible for making Jean the master potter that she is? She was schooled at the feet of no other than the illustrious Cecil Baugh and his assistant Leonard Willard who were her teachers at the School of Art. She also benefitted from a two year stint of teaching at the School, since it was

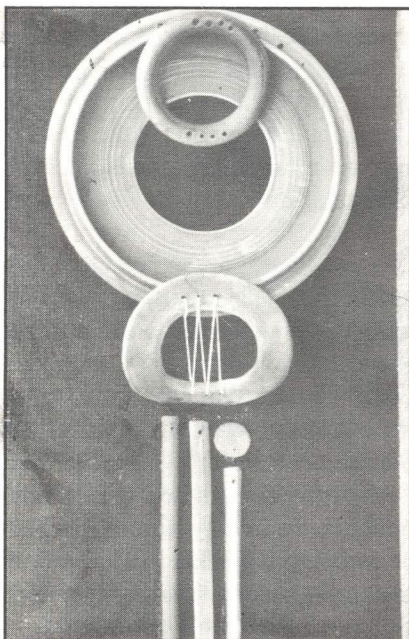
customary, in the early days, for students to teach for two years immediately after graduation.

Several other individuals also helped to shape the well rounded individual that Jean has become. She speaks fondly of Mr. Aiken at Aikens Clay Work "I am thankful for the knowledge he gave me in my early years. To today we are very close friends.

To the question, "What or who inspired you to be a potter?" Jean laughingly responds, "I went to the Art School out of mere curiosity. My mother had an artist friend who saw my interest in art and encouraged her to send me to the Art School. So I went there to see what was going on. I saw the ceramic department and that was it... that was it! Jean immediately enrolled as a part time student for two terms and as soon as she graduated from high school became a full time student and in four years completed her Diploma.

Asked about her economic well being Jean says, "As perhaps the oldest woman potter, certainly the oldest female graduate of the School, I manage to survive. Younger and more recent graduates are making more money, but that's the way it is.

To the question are you concerned about cheap imports putting you out of business? Jean responds, "The potters practicing in Jamaica are Art Potters. They are not so much commercial potters. There are one or two commercial potters around and I don't think even they have any problems. In fact they are not so much commercial as that they run more of a production line. And you can hardly compare it with imports as



*Jean's creativeness is brought out in this wall hanging.*

the quality of their work is so good. Also they cater to a different clientele than those who would purchase imports.

Marketing of the potters work is done mainly through Devon House, the Art Galleries, fairs and exhibitions and some shops outside of Kingston. Asked about their relationship with galleries, Jean reluctantly explains, "... mainly the problem arises because the work is sold and you have to wait a long time for payment." She is quick to point out, "Not all galleries are the same." However we are not happy about it" (the late payments).

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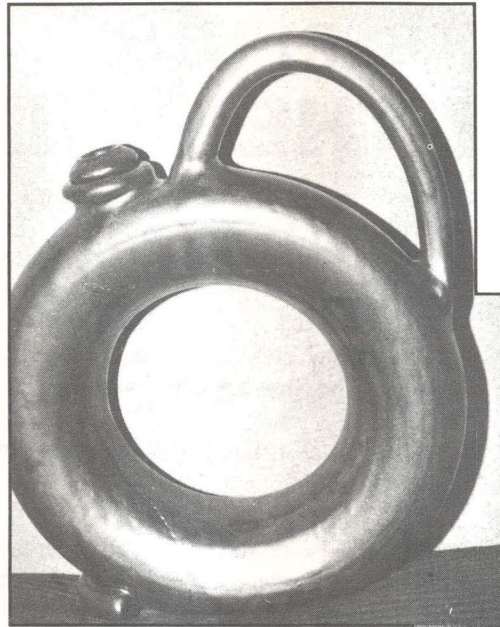
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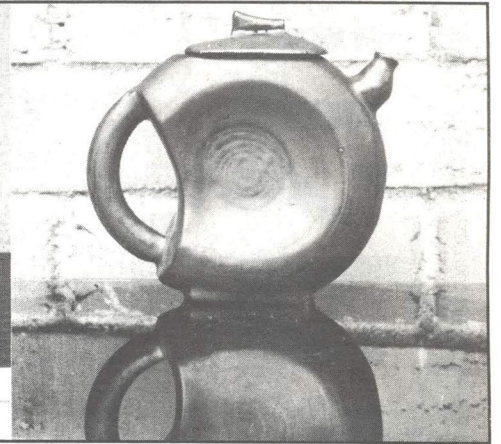
One strategy that the potters have thought of adopting is asking the galleries, especially for exhibitions, to take part payment on works while the exhibition is going on and final payment by the end of the show. "Because there are times when items are marked sold at an exhibition and for the next three to four months payment is not made. So you may have a show and you think that you are making \$20,000 and when you check it out that dollar stretches out over two years and that dollar is no good for you. It is really a problem."

Jean sees one solution as potters setting up their own shops. "We have been trying for sometime to get a shop. To set up some sort of cooperative to sell our own work. That objective is still on the agenda, but you know in these things you have to have the right location and space."

"In addition some potters are thinking more seriously of having their own outlets. Two potters already have their own outlets and many more are thinking about it. I have been thinking about it for years. But you know the artist's mind goes and comes. And really the galleries expose our work to



*These teapots reflect the symmetry and professionalism characteristic of Jean's work.*



people from different walks of life and we can't cut that off."

Jamaican potters are excellent users of local raw materials. They import very little, chemicals like glaze are mainly what they need to import. They have little problems with availability as there is a main supplier in Miami from whom potters import individually.

What inspires her creativity? "Not limited, it may be a shadow. When I started years ago I was very limited to more utilitarian items (cups and saucers, tablewear). Today I am inspired by the work of a lot of younger potters. They came out bolder than we did... they dealt with larger items etc and I am inspired by them. I am not moving totally away from my original style but opening up more, being able to pot more confidently."

**How did you combine motherhood with being a professional potter?** "I have a great mother. Thank God for mothers... thank God! She has always been by my side and she has always given me the opportunity to work while she spends time with the boys. They were always around me of course, because I was still a mother but she gave me that chance to delve more into my work, while she did a lot of the things I should have been doing for the boys. This has bound us together not just as mother and daughter but close friends."

"My husband migrated over 14 years ago. My children lived abroad with him so my mother and I spent a lot of time going back and forth to keep the family together... to keep that closeness. I didn't want to live abroad. But my younger son was not doing so well in school and I decided to take him home, but the older boy is still with my husband."

"My boys have been very good in inspiring me. They have not taken on pottery, but they were always there to compliment, or tear me to pieces. This made me stronger. Even now my youngest son, he comes home in the evenings, looks at my work and make comments. Even this evening, he was doing some corrections to the work I did this morning."

**Are there any gender biases in the industry?** She laughs, "Overall there are more women than men artists in Jamaica and there are more women potters. Gender does not come between us as potters. We are all good friends. However it is an individual thing and people price their work according to what they think they have put into it."

To set up a studio for potting is very expensive. Machinery is not readily available and is pretty costly, also very risky. Losses can be significant. There may be a bad

# WARNING

## TO ALL PARENTS: SAVE THE CHILDREN

A Warning to all Parents: a form of tatoo called "Blue Star" is bring sold to school children. It is a small piece of paper containing a Blue Star that is the size of a pencil eraser. **The Star is soaked with LSD.**

The drug is absorbed through the skin simply by handling the paper.

There are also brightly coloured paper tabs resembling postage stamps that have the picture of the following:

**SUPERMAN  
MICKEY MOUSE  
DISNEY CHARACTERS  
CLOWNS  
BART SIMPSON  
BUTTERFLIES**

This is the way of selling ACID by appealing to young children. These are laced with drugs. If your child gets any of the above do not handle them. These are known to react quickly and some are laced with STRYCHNINE.

**SYMPTOMS: HALLUNICATIONS, SEVERE VOMITING, UNCONTROLLED LAUGHTER, MOOD CHANGES, CHANGES IN BODY TEMPERATURE.**

Please feel free to reproduce this article and distribute it within your community or workplace - get the word out about this danger to our children.

From: J. O'Donnely Danbury Hospital Outpatient Chemical Department Treatment Service, United Kingdom.

Please copy and post at your work, give to friends, send a copy to your local schools. This is very serious - **YOUNG LIVES HAVE ALEADY BEEN TAKEN.** This is growing faster than we can warn parents and professionals.

*This aricle was reprinted from the DAILY GLEANER.*

### ARTS (cont'd from pg. 25)

batch of clay, a chemical problem, a firing problem, things can happen. Overheads are high.

Jean concludes by crying the cry of many Jamaicans. "Potters have a lot to offer to this country, if only somebody cared! The quality of the work is excellent but the people are stuck. It is not far fetched that the government should set up studios for small craft people so that their work could expand along the natural growth path. Studios for which they could pay rental, not for free she adds quickly. But she laments. There is no political mileage to be gained from something as mundane as that. Thus Jean is not holding her breath for any action in that regard.

Jean would love for pottery to be taught in

schools. But the way she sees it, pottery has been looked down upon for a number of years. There is the impression that people do it because they can't do anything else. "I have known teachers who have tried to introduce pottery into the school curriculum but failed because there was no support from the administration. Where it is introduced it also fails from lack of priority as materials for pottery is given last place."

**What is Jean's message for younger potters?** "First and foremost if you do not love it don't go into it. It is hard work. But it is not just work it is a therapy. It is inspiration to the soul. It is not something that, especially with the current get rich quick mentality, you should go into unless you make up your mind that you are going into it to work. You can make money out of it but not overnight.

In an attempt to strengthen their work the

potters have formed a Potters Association which is now 6 years old. It brings together a group of practising potters with the aim of bonding. "The nature of the artists work is individualistic. They most often work on their own to create that distinctive style. They tend therefore to neglect the business side of their work. She laughingly says "Potters are not business people." But even though the Association is faltering she believes they will succeed in building unity and togetherness.

Their most significant efforts are their annual exhibition (June) and fair (December) where the best of the industry is displayed. Jean believes that there is a bright future for potters here in Jamaica and that their work will become one of the significant foreign exchange earners in the future.



# HEALTH UPDATE

Sistren Theatre Collective joins all of Jamaica in congratulating Terrian, the first Jamaican to publicly tell the nation that she has the AIDS virus. Sistren salutes her courage and urges her to continue to be bold and strong. We as women are the main care givers and therefore have a special responsibility for preventing the spread of AIDS and encouraging the nation to adopt a healthy life style.

As Terrian said, Jamaica needs to be understanding and sympathetic to those who have the virus because that will go a far way in reducing the anger which some infected persons feel. The hostility and scorn that members of the public, such as health and public transportation workers heap on persons they know have AIDS is generating anger among some infected persons. Some community and family members, are driving these people away. Many are consequently deprived of the love and proper health care they need and deserve. Some are so angry that they are avenging the society by spreading the virus through having unprotected sex.

After all as Terrian said *I didn't go out and take my money and buy AIDS. I didn't deliberately contract it.* Chances are that you know someone who is HIV positive or has AIDS although you may not be aware of it. You need to come to terms with the fact that maybe your spouse, your daughter, your son or you yourself may be infected. The latest statistics show that the spread of the virus is on the increase. Already our health resources are stretched to the limit and will have difficulty handling increased illnesses resulting from AIDS. Prevention

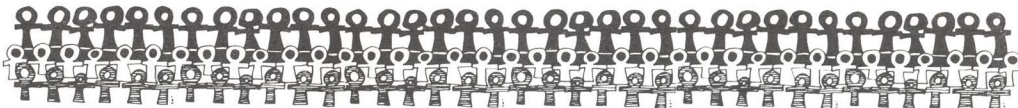
Year Reported	Male	Female	Total	Cumulative
1982	1	0	1	1
1983	0	0	0	1
1984	1	0	1	2
1985	3	0	3	5
1986	6	0	6	11
1987	19	13	32	43
1988	22	8	30	73
1989	44	20	64	137
1990	41	21	62	199
1991	74	60	134	333
1992	68	32	100	433
1993	110	60	170	603
<b>Total</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>603</b>

is therefore the answer. Practising safe sex and exercising care in the selection of your partner will go a long way in preventing the spread of the disease. Look at the figures and understand that you must exercise care:

The thing to do is take action now. If you, your friend or your family need help do not hesitate to contact the **AIDS help line. The telephone numbers are 926-1818-9; 927-1620-9; 968-8867-9.** You may also contact **The Family Centre at the University**

**Hospital of the West Indies, Mona, or Jamaica AIDS Support, 11A Osbourne Rd. Kingston 10 Tel # 968-8867-9 or ACOSTRAD which is the Association for the Control of Sexually transmitted Diseases at 30-34 Half Way Tree Road, Kingston 5.**

Extend your heart in love for your brother and sister. Let Terrian's effort not be in vain.



# MARSON

## "EXCEPTIONAL", "CRAZY", "different"

By Honor Ford-Smith



Until the 1940s, Marson was the only black woman writer and cultural worker consistently engaged with social issues, writing about the experience and lives of women.

The ideal of woman as nurturer, maternal and endowed with the "civilizing mission" of the society, dominated the debates of the time. It emanated from British colonial policy and from the church to permeate popular movements and political parties and even put its tentacles around the various branches of the feminist movement. We can see that image shattered by the level of action in the street, in the reality of women's sexuality and work, and in the inability of the society to provide the material basis for the consumer patterns of the ideal.

Marson's poetry provides us with one of the few senses of dis-ease with the colonial ideal of womanhood. Through humorous spoofs on English literary classics she satirized marriage and romantic ideals, questioning whether these are always the happy touchstone of women's reality:

"If you can love and not make love your master  
If you can serve yet not be his slave..."  
['If': p.83, Tropical Reveries, 1930]

"To wed or not to wed: that is the question  
Whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer

The fret and loneliness of spinsterhood  
Or to take up arms against the single state  
And by marrying end it? To wed, to match  
No more; yet tis match to say we end  
The heartache and the thousand natural  
shocks  
That flesh is heir to; tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To wed, to match  
To match, perchance mismatch: aye there's  
the rub."

[To Wed or not to Wed': p.81 Tropical  
Reveries, 1930]

Borrowing from the Southern American  
blues she makes an attack on the standards  
of white beauty as applied to black women:

"Gwine find a beauty shop  
Cause I ain't a belle  
The boys pass me by  
They say I's not so swell.  
See oder young gals  
So slick and smart  
See those oder young gals  
So slick and smart  
I jes' gwine die on the shelf  
If I don't make a start

I hate that ironed hair  
and dat bleachin skin  
Hate dat ironed hair  
And dat bleachin skin  
But I'll be all alone  
If I don't fall in.  
[Kinky Hair Blues': p.91, The Moth and the  
Stars, 1937]

It is in giving voice to this dis-ease that she  
is perceived as "crazy" and is "exceptional";  
and it is this difference that isolates her in  
her critical stance.

Unlike many other prominent writers and  
artists of the time, she is unable to find a  
patron or husband on whom she can rely to  
promote her work and to boost her confi-  
dence. She finds no Walter Jekyll as Claude  
McKay does, no Norman as Edna Manley  
does; she has no landed wealthy family as  
Edith Clarke the anthropologist does. Her  
material circumstances are precarious and  
she does not solve the problem by marriage.  
Her credibility is not increased by claims to  
male protection. Nor is the area in which  
she works one which guarantees any mate-  
rial security.

cont'd on pg. 30

like so many others, headed home in the '70s.

How did she come to find Sistren? "Oh. I saw them perform in 1978, Belly Woman Bangarang and was quite impressed. Elma Shelly whom I knew in England was then the Production Manager for Sistren", and knowing Betti's extraordinary talent for designing, invited her to work with the costumes. At that time they were designed by M'bala and sewn by Betti. They embraced each other and never let go. For every major Sistren production since, Betti has designed the costumes.

She also taught some Sistren members textiles design and production; which is now a significant fund-raiser for Sistren. Betti is also a member of Sistren's Advisory Board. She modestly says, "In the early days I was more involved in policy making and planning. Those were exciting days. I love working with theatre, always with people, especially off stage. They can be hilarious." She says of Sistren's members, "They are dynamic and creative."

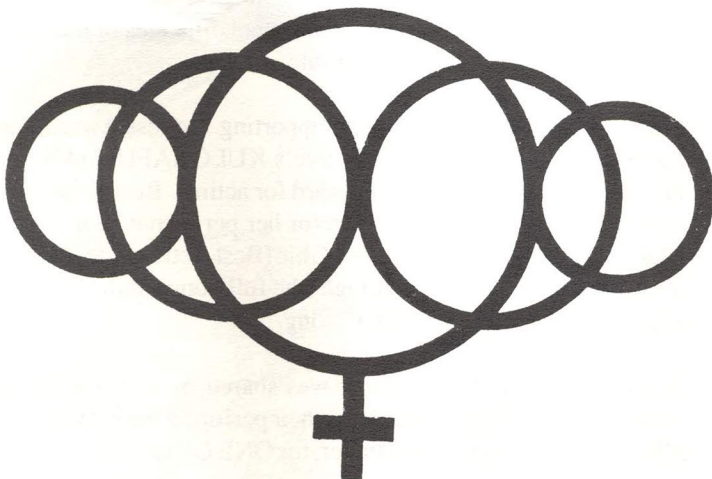
She has travelled with Sistren to Barbados to CARIFESTA, to Grenada, St. Vincent and Toronto. She also worked on the video Miss Amy and Miss Mae which she describes as "fabulous".

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***"Working with Sistren was like creating history. It was a positive collective experience. It taught me how to share... not just material things. It convinced me that there was no limit to what can be achieved once you have the commitment. I am proud to have been a part of that process."***

---

To see the group growing from working out of the School of Drama to owning its own facilities really gives me a good feeling. In the beginning they used to print textiles at my house, now there is a whole workshop at the Head office.



How does Betti see Sistren in the future? "I think they are on the right track. They have tremendous potential for growth."

Betti has an 8 year old daughter. She loves being a mother, though she admits that "Parenting is an awesome responsibility which ought to be taught." It takes a lot of organizing to juggle the work and child care, but she succeeds with help from the father.

At this point we are interrupted by three persons who want to confirm that WEEK-END WITH THE POETS for Saturday and Sunday nights is still on. Betti reassures them "Yes it is", and encourages the visitors to look at the historic sites at the Olde Goal. It provides me with the opportunity of asking Betti about the poetry reading put on by Sandra Myers, Karen Gentles and herself. Here you can listen to nice nice poetry sitting on the floor cushions and mats or the outdoor staircase and eat fry fish and bammy.

What has inspired Betti to operate her work shop as well as a sales outlet in Port Royal, after all many see it as a dead-end town. Well, not Betti. She has had the foresight, like the caravans in the wild west, to be on the frontline. She firmly believes that this old fishing town with the deepest of history will one day become the tourist mecca of Jamaica, especially for those interested in ecotourism - the tourism of the future. And when it happens she will be there.

The message she has for the nation is that we need to come together and realize that we are one country. Each and everyone has a part to play individually and collectively. Betti quickly says, "I need to finish this order," and gets up to go back to work, but not before, in true Jamaican style offering me some of the chicken soup which Miss Campbell is preparing for lunch. So I thanked her for the interview and departed on the 1:00 p.m. Ferry but not before I had by chicken soup with the flour dumpling, sitting on a soft cushion encased in a cover with Betti's design. Thank you Betti.

The precariousness of her emotional life is matched by the precariousness of the cultural institutions in Jamaica at the time; a Jamaica which did not yet have a university, a Cultural Training Centre or a National Library and where artistic work is seen as a hobby for the cultivated.

Her position is even more isolated because in the literary milieu of the time, the voice of the middle-class Black woman is totally absent. The tradition of writing about the working-class woman, as Rhonda Cobham points out, become a virtual tradition of the early period of Jamaican writing. Efforts to resolve the contradiction of working class women's "promiscuity" with their [strength and determination] as embodiments of hard work and industry had become a well established theme. This debate took many forms and ranged through the narrative of Claude McKay to Clarke McFarlane's treatise in favour of male polygamy and female monogomy, sex and christianity. The latter argued that where men outnumbered women, men should be allowed to have more than one wife so that women could have children and be looked after financially. Middle class women are either absent from male narrative of the time or else portrayed as a problem by the male persona. DeLisser's *Jane's Career* is one example of the opposing stereotypes of women of the class. Whereas Jane, the domestic helper is presented as the "diligent and decent" upwardly mobile black woman, her lighter skinned employer is portrayed as exploitative, lazy, abusive and as the embodiment of the worst aspects of bourgeois pretentiousness. And later on the nationalist writers such as Vic Reid, continue to present the middle-class women as embodiments of all that is both alluring and repulsively evil.

In breaking out of the silence which had encased the life of the black middle class woman in Jamaican literature, Marson begins a tradition of writing in which middle-class black Jamaican women speak out about their condition from a growing sense of self-hood.


Marson's work is not in the tradition of one who reflects the actions and values of a society to give them meaning. It is not like the writing of a Louise Bennett who turns anger to satire, who is the keeper of traditions, the voice of representative ideals; who does not strain after grand sentiments, but gives value to people's daily lives and places great importance on humour as essential to survival. Marson's persona fits the tradition of the writer as a gifted individual attacking or upholding a conviction,

challenging perceptions and the established order. Hers is the voice of the outsider, struggling for self, struggling for voice, yet trying to link with a collective cultural experience. In making a rupture with a previous tradition, Marson steps into a kind of void, a place where there existed no precedent in form or content for women writers.

*In the next issue we will further explore Marson's difference, her isolation.*

◆ **ACTOR BOY AWARDS** ◆

◆ *for excellence in theatre arts* ◆



*Maxine Osbourne*

On June 14, the annual Actor Boy Awards ceremony was held at the Philip Sherlock Centre for the Creative Arts (PSCCA), U.W.I. A buzz of excited anticipation ran through the crowd of local theatre practitioners and friends, as they awaited the announcement of the 1993 winners.

Actor Boy Awards were given not just in categories of acting and directing, but for design and costuming, for children's theatre, musical, roots comedy, drama, and for the best revival of a production. There were numerous nominations in several of the 15 categories judged. And the audience was reminded that a nomination was in itself recognition of excellent work as determined by the panel of judges of the Jamaica Centre of the International Theatre Institute.

Maxine Osbourne won the Best Supporting Actress Award, for her role as Junior in Sistren Theatre Collective's KULCHAFUSHAN. Maxine was the youngest person to win an award for acting. Best Actress Award went to veteran actress Leonie Forbes for her performance in BEYOND THE HORIZON. When MC Grace McGhie (Best Actress, 1992) announced that it was Leonie's birthday that night the full house at the PSCCA burst into a spontaneous 'happy birthday' song.

Actor/Supporting Actor awards was shared by well-known actors Tony Hendricks and Oliver Samuels for their performance in Walcott's PANTOMIME, and to veteran Karl Binger, for ONE OF OUR SONS IS MISSING.

# CAN I CALL YOU SISTER

## LIBERATION OR MANIPULATION ?



## DANCING AROUND (cont'd from pg. 23)

In addition, at the local level of the economy the dancehall event provides a hub around which a number of economic activities revolve. Consider, for example, the network of people who are involved in the production of a single dance session, let alone a major international event like Reggae Sunsplash. First, there is the managerial skills of the producers of the show. Then there is the whole range of technical skills that are needed for the production: lighting, sound, stage properties. The preparation of the venue requires yet another set of logistical skills.

The vendors who sell refreshments outside the venue, as much as the official sponsors who sell inside, all make a living out of the event. The design and production of posters to advertise sessions is another important aspect of the business. The security systems that are so essential to guarantee a measure of order at large public functions are part of the dense network of economic activities.

Most importantly, the personal style of the fashion-conscious patrons of these events

requires the collaboration of a number of operators to turn out the well-coiffed, well-dressed 'mogla' [modeller]. There are the higglers who import the material and the clothes; and the hairdressers and dress-makers who use their skills to create the 'boom' style of the moment for women and men, who 'shok out' at the session.

---

*In the contemporary period, development means understanding the past in order to use its lessons to determine appropriate strategies of social transformation.*

---

The projection of the dancehall as a model of development illustrates the multi-layered ways in which the very notion of

'development' needs to be considered. There are competing value systems in Jamaica today that need to be rigorously analyzed. There is the pious pie-in-the-sky optimism that is derided so biting in the movie *The Harder They Come: and there is the pragmatism* that expects immediate reward commensurate with effort.

Those who would dismiss the dancehall and its culture of "vulgar" materialism as a regression to a dark past of primitivism need to test the continuing viability of the alternative models of development that Jamaican society offers aspiring youth. With limited economic resources to ensure upward mobility the creative will of the people as seen in the dancehall culture must be garnered and channeled in the right direction.

<sup>1</sup> Louise Bennett, *Jamaica Labrish*, Sangster's: Kingston Jamaica, 1966; rpt 1975, 28. The orthography used for Jamaican creole in *Jamaica Labrish* differs from that developed by the Jamaican linguist Frederic Cassidy. I use the Cassidy orthography for my transcription of the lyrics of the DJs.

*Dr. Carolyn Cooper is a lecturer in English at the University of the West Indies.*

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# WE MOVED ON FROM THOSE DAYS

From those days...  
It was from those days  
that we lived in this world and Africa  
which we know as the Land of Gold  
It was from those days  
that my parents and grandparents  
All my ancestors were born in that land  
It was from those days  
That the enemies fought us  
Sold us  
Beat us  
And robbed us

## *But we moved on*

It was from those days  
That we were innocent of robbing  
people's rights  
For we are  
just  
strong  
powerful  
and loving  
We must continue to be  
For we owe that to our Ancestors

And it was from those days  
That our ancestors chose Nelson Mandela  
and from those days the strength continues  
and He, We All of us  
Fought  
and many lives  
Lost  
And we wept as we have been weeping  
from those days.

## ***BUT WE MOVED ON***

And these days  
Unlike those days we're weeping no more  
But we are joyful  
Joyful to see Nelson Mandela  
who fought for Justice  
Liberty and Freedom  
moved from a Prisoner  
to a President  
He said  
away with Apartheid  
Now, He must reign  
For He obeyed His ancestor

## ***HE, IS MOVING ON.***

*By Lana McFarlane*

or slim) the X-rated styles are distasteful, and are really the doings of a few twisted exhibitionists who use it to get attention.

### NOT JUST NAKEDNESS

At the same time it must be recognized that dancehall fashion is not just about nakedness. Other outfits worn to the dances are 100% linen suits, jeans suits, poet and peasant blouses with laces and frills. All of these can be dancehall fashion depending on the jewelry, shoes and handbag that you wear.

"You dress like how you want to. Sometimes I want to shock out, another time I want to dress casual, ragamuffin style," says Princess. Her friend Sharlene says it is not just your mood which determines what you wear but also who is putting on the dance. A community dance is small time, and the dress code is 'anything goes' or casual wear. Fancy and big dollar outfits are for the dances put on by 'foreign dons' or when the four way sound systems clash. If you can't keep up then you are in trouble. Whether the video man is there will also determine how you dress for that occasion.

"A dance with a videoman is a hot dance", explains Belinda. "A man wid money or a drugs man from foreign put on dat dance. So the girls go to big up themselves, 'cause [the dance promoter] show the video to him friends at foreign, and dem sey some of dem [video] come on CSN too."

The music also influences the fashion. "When you hear kick out yuh foot becau' you shape nice and so on, you wear X-rated clothes to show how clean you skin is, and dat you body ready," Belinda laughs mischievously.

The women can also be very competitive as the fashion becomes a weapon in group rivalry and sexual politics.

"Some of the girls dem dress up to come model pon a next group" says Melissa, Sharlene's friend. These girls are called the 'modelling posses'. (They are not formal groups like the Dancehall Models or X-Girls). They are female-groups of diehard

dancehall loyalists from different innercity communities or competing factions from the same community who try to outdress each other at. They are usually hostile to one another because of some conflict in the community.

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*At the dancehalls, freedom of expression reigns; sex is taken out of the closet and treated as something positive and wholesome.*

---

In some instances a posse may also be formed to give support to a group member who is upset because her matie (Matie is a woman who is trying to steal another woman's partner, or the other woman in the man's life) at he dance.

Precious explains. "If yu matie deh a de dance and yu look shabby and she in a sequins, she a go start rail pon yu wid her friend dem and start laugh after you, and de most excitement. Especially if your boyfriend 'ave her as the girl pon the side. It come in like seh him a give her more money dan yu."

This competitiveness is a non-violent way of dealing with conflicts in their interpersonal relationships. However Sharlene feels

that the modelling can sometimes lead to bad fights.

Belinda disagrees. She cannot recall the last time a fight between two women happened in the dance. Besides women who fight do so at their peril. The promoter and his 'security personnel' will give them a sound beating and remove them from the dance.

"You see the modelling business, everybody just recognise seh is ju fun and niceness a gwaan. So, when the girls rail up their mate, they make the dance nice," she says.

### TEMPORARY RELIEF

"Niceness" certainly oozes from the dance. Going there is a great experience for these women. There they find temporary relief from the personal and social problems in their lives and communities. At the dancehalls, freedom of expression reigns; sex is taken out of the closet and treated as something positive and wholesome.

The women pledge to continue supporting dancehall. They dismiss the critics comments as unhelpful and coming from people who do not understand their reality. Belinda says to the people who a fight down the music...

We like it, we support it, we give the DJs the vibes to sing the music... here we meet we friends, and we talk, dance... you get the right vibes and nuff togetherness."

*All names are fictitious.*



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# FROM OUR MAILBAG



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sistren

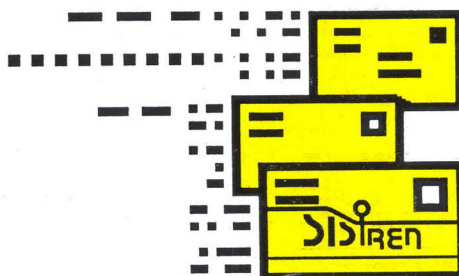
We have been receiving the Sistren magazine for some years now and have always found it very informative on gender issues. We have drawn strength and, yes, armoured ourselves by sharing in your experiences.

The anger and determination expressed in the pages leaves one with an urge to make efforts to change attitudes. So you see, after reading this magazine I felt compelled to write and say, "You are all doing great".

Enclosed please find our publicity folder.

Yours sincerely

P Mabhena  
Iluba Public Relations  
Iluba Elimnyama Theatre Works  
P.O. Box 7017, Mzilikaza  
Bulawayo



Dear Sistren

A new reference book entitled Encyclopedia of Women's Association Worldwide (EWAW), published by Gale Research International Limited is now available. This first edition lists over 3,400 Women's and Women's related organizations covering a broad range of subjects including Breast Cancer, Child Care, Divorce, Domestic Violence, Equal Rights, Lesbianism, Pregnancy, Sexual Harassment, Business and Management, Women in Politics, Religion, Sports and many more pertinent areas.

EWAW is arranged into eight geographic regions- Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Caribbean, Central and South America, C.I.S. and the Baltic States, Europe, Middle East and North America. Entries are then arranged alphabetically by country within regional chapters, and alphabetically by organization under country headings and alphabetically by organization under country sub-headings. Two indexes, an Alphabetic name Index and an Organizations' activities Index, are included to facilitate quick and convenient searching. The high-

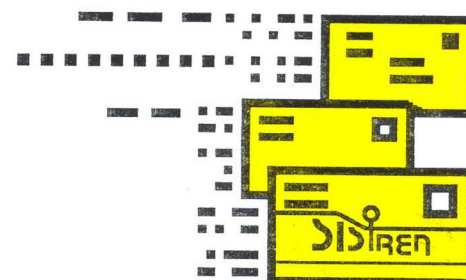
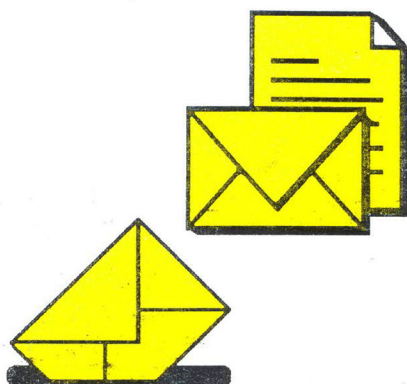
lights of the book, Foreword, Introduction, and User's Guide sections are translated into French, German and Spanish to promote international use. The price of EWAW is US \$80:00

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Sincerely yours  
Jacquiline K. Barrett  
Editor

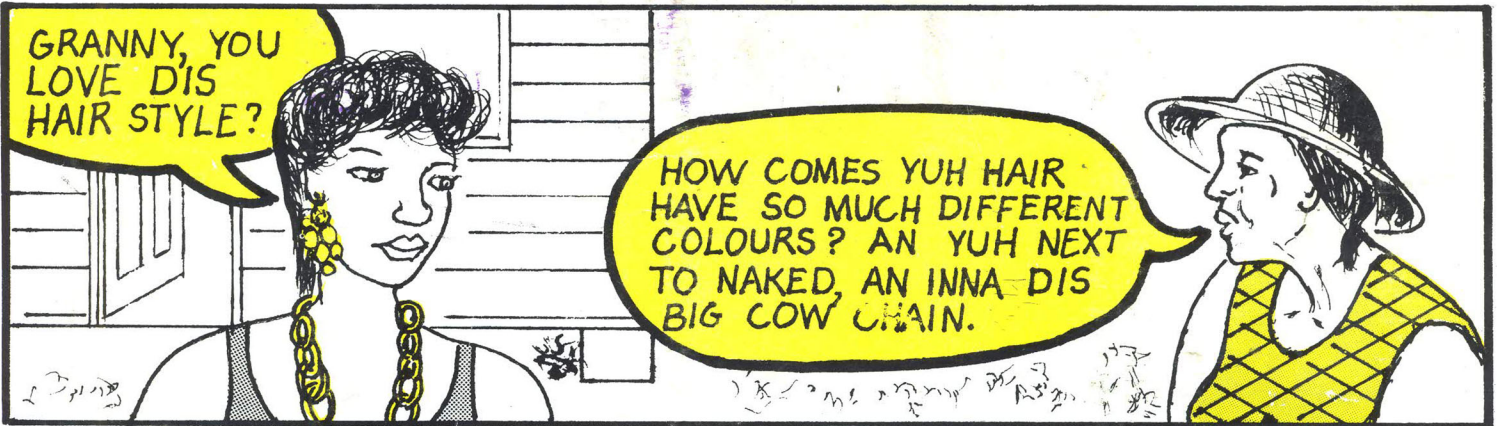




# SISTA ANSA AND GRANNY

A CHAT BOUT

# "DANCE HALL CULTURE"



GRANNY, YOU LOVE DIS HAIR STYLE?

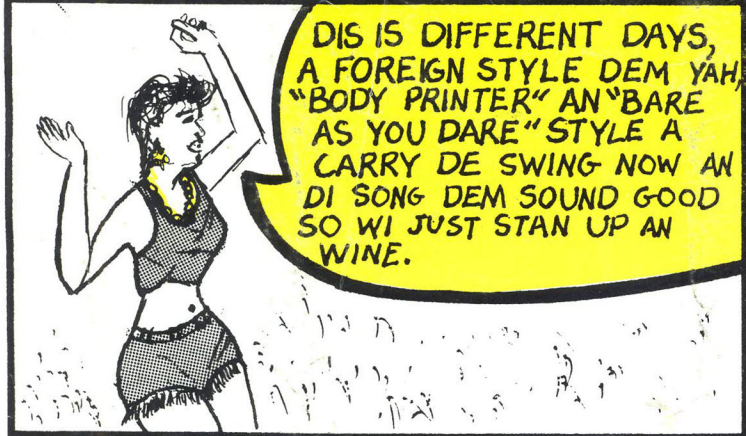
HOW COMES YUH HAVE SO MUCH DIFFERENT COLOURS? AN YUH NEXT TO NAKED, AN INNA DIS BIG COW CHAIN.



GRANNY, IF I DONT WEAR DIS STYLE, I WILL BE A LAUGHING STOCK. DIS A DI NEW LICK AN EVERY POSSIE A TRY FI OUT-DRESS THE OTHERS.



NEW LICK FI KILL OONU. IN MY DAYS, MI FROCK HAFFI LONG AN WIDE SO DAT WHEN MI SPIN, IT JUS WRAP 'ROUND MI'.



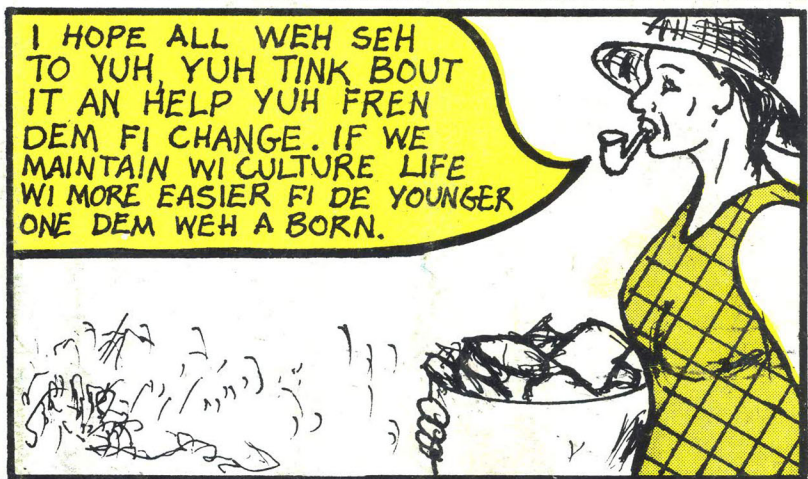
DIS IS DIFFERENT DAYS, A FOREIGN STYLE DEM YAH "BODY PRINTER" AN "BARE AS YOU DARE" STYLE A CARRY DE SWING NOW AN DI SONG DEM SOUND GOOD SO WI JUST STAN UP AN WINE.



IN MY DAYS DEM KIND A LYRICS COULDN'T PLAY IN PUBLIC. PEOPLE HAVE TO HAVE ON CLOTHES AND GIRLS DRESS LIKE LADIES



IF MI NUH DRESS LIKE MI FREN DEM, ME BETTER JUST FORM SICK INNA DE BED NUTHING NUH WRONG WID DI LATEST STYLE.



I HOPE ALL WEH SEH TO YUH, YUH TINK BOUT IT AN HELP YUH FREN DEM FI CHANGE. IF WE MAINTAIN WI CULTURE LIFE WI MORE EASIER FI DE YOUNGER ONE DEM WEH A BORN.