

ABSTRACT

The Significance of Music in the Political History of the Caribbean: The Case of Jamaica (1950-1980)

Patrick Clarke Hylton

This dissertation argues that all Caribbean history, from the conquest of the region by the Spanish in 1492 to the present time reflects with varying intensity a chain of oppression and resistance, and that music became and has remained an important part of that dichotomy. Utilizing the lyrical component for content analysis and as a primary methodological tool, the study shows music to be a major chronicler of that tortured history and a herald and advocate that continues to demand the people's aspirations for freedom, social justice and human dignity. The recurrent theme of freedom suggests a continued elusiveness of these aspirations, despite the assumptions of the Emancipation Act of 1833 and the attainment of independence in 1962.

On the contrary, what is demonstrated, as shown by the music, is that postcolonial Jamaica has doggedly followed colonialism's trail of cruelty, lies, deceit, betrayal, brainwash, inequality, police brutality, socioeconomic and political oppression, denial of freedom, denial of human rights, inequitableness, and so forth. Over the past several decades, this dichotomy has found expression in the official postcolonial history and historiography largely through the efforts of a redemptive intellectual stream in alliance with the standard bearers of the centuries-old resistance movements. However, the myths and prejudicial constructs of class, race and ethnic superiority remain tenacious.

Therefore, the dissertation concludes that the general history of Jamaica contains a great deal of deformities which can be corrected by a greater inclusion of the poor majority, especially the descendants of the former enslaved and "emancipated" Africans, their folklore and aesthetics, especially music, whose protest songs have persuasively demonstrated the need for such inclusion.

Keywords: Patrick Clarke Hylton; Significance of Music; Political History; Caribbean.