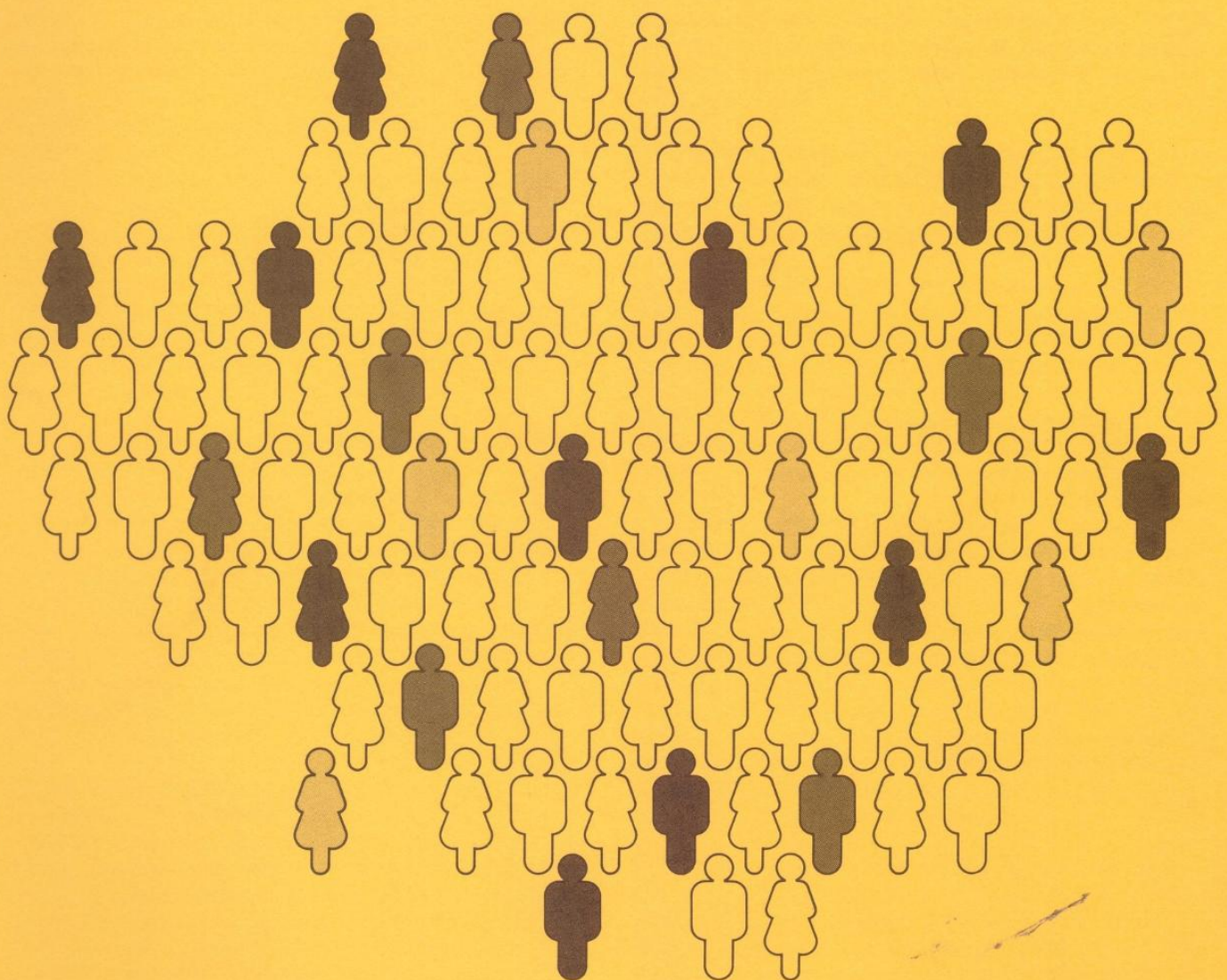


Rastafarianism in Greater London



Ethnic Minorities in London

Introduction

1 When the Ethnic Minorities Committee considered the report, Rastafarianism in Greater London (EM 139) on 6 December 1982 the following decisions were taken:

- (a) That officers report again following further consultations with Rastafarian groups and other appropriate organisations on a programme for their community.
- (b) That the Committee agree in principle to give priority in their 1983-4 budget to funding suitable projects, as in paragraph 4(b) of the report, to promote the welfare of the Rastafarian community in London.
- (c) That representation be made to the Home Secretary asking him to extend his consideration of Rastafarianism as a religion to include borstals and detention centres as well as prisons.
- (d) That the report be referred to the Single Homeless Sub-Committee with the recommendation that they give special attention to the issue of accommodation.

This report examines responses to each of the above decisions. It appends the research report on Rastafarians which has been altered in places to respond to some of the criticisms and positive suggestions made by Rastafarian and other interested groups.

First Published in Great Britain by The Greater London Council,
County Hall, London SE1 7PB
© 1984 The Greater London Council

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright holder.

ISBN 7168 1363 7

Designed and produced by the GLC Public Relations Branch
Printed by Yale Press Ltd 1/1887/2.5m/3.84



Rastafarianism in Greater London Report back on consultation

Criticisms and positive proposals

2 This section will be in three parts. First, it will report on criticisms and on positive proposals suggested by Rastafarians about the research paper. Secondly, it will suggest policy developments that the Committee may wish to consider to meet Rastafarian criticism. Thirdly, it will report on the consultations with Rastafarian groups and the development of a programme for their community.

3 For the most part the Rastafarians to whom the report was sent for comments welcomed the Committee's initiative in attempting to make information available about Rastafarianism. It is felt by many Rastafarians that they are misunderstood and maligned by various institutions and individuals in white society. They felt that it was a positive step to explain Rastafarian history, beliefs and practices as well as Rastafarian attitudes to white institutions and white responses to Rastafarians. It was suggested that the report should have wide circulation.

4 Almost without exception, the Rastafarians, while welcoming the report, felt 'frustrated' or suggested that the author ultimately failed the attempt at explanation because she was not a Rasta and consequently could not understand or explain the Rastafarian experience. By implication a grounding in this experience would have produced a different report. This problem was examined in the note on research methods (Appendix B in the report). To try to overcome this problem, as well as referring to published material (a majority of which has been written by non-Rastas), great weight was attached to the discussions held with Rastafarians.

These Rastas and their organisations are named in Appendix C to the research report along with other people and organisations with whom consultations took place. The implications of this criticism are examined in the section on further policy development in para 9 below. The almost exclusive reference to works by non-Rastas which was criticised is a difficult issue. Rastas have written little about their experience and it is to be hoped that publishers would give priority to accepting more manuscripts from Rasta authors to remedy this situation.

5 Several other comments have been incorporated into the text. One had to do with the recommendation that Rastas should be given employment opportunities in the health and social services and as community workers. It was suggested by a Rasta that Rastas need 'greater assistance in industrial and commercial enterprises' as well. They need help in setting up and

running commercially viable businesses. Several suggestions were made concerning funding for voluntary groups and their need for assistance in working up grant applications as well as information about alternative sources of finance. Conclusions on this will be discussed below in para 10. Other issues raised had to do with safeguards for Rastafarian rights in penal institutions. That issue is discussed in the section below dealing with the representations made to the Home Secretary (paras 15 to 23).

6 Several responses suggested that the religious aspects of Rastafarianism were not explained as well as they might be. Since Rastafarian religious experience is individualised, personal and changing, it is difficult to include particular points which might be agreed by all Rastas. None of the respondents specified any specific distortions or misunderstandings. Until more Rastas write of and publish their experience it is difficult to correct what is acknowledged as an outsider's view. One respondent would have preferred more emphasis on the psychology of Rastafarianism rather than explanations grounded in economic, social and political terms.

7 Some comments were made about the sections on Rasta women's roles. A few changes in the text have been made but overall those sections rely heavily on discussions with Rastas and on the writings of Rastas about themselves. Much of the criticism relates to interpretation and judgements of Rasta and white norms. It seems fair to suggest that in both groups women and men are examining their own roles and by definition that sort of critical reappraisal may well result in changes. It is an area of great variation and change in both black and white societies and for this reason no categorical statements can be made.

8 There were also suggestions that expansions to the paper could be made about the social environmental conditions of early Rastas and about media treatment of Rastas. It was decided that lengthening the paper might not necessarily clarify the important issues raised. Health issues, it was felt, were insufficiently explained. This was due to lack of available evidence. Despite these criticisms it must be emphasised that overall the paper was praised and wider distribution was suggested.

Suggestions for Further Policy Development

9 Two important issues were raised by the consultations with Rastas about the research report. The first, referred to in para 4 above, is that all of the Rastafarians thought the report should have been

written by a Rasta. No doubt, a personal base in the black experience would have provided a much better starting point for such a research report than one done by an outsider. Black researchers have recently raised the issue of what they call the 'monopoly of knowledge' which white social scientists control. A recent review article (in the Summer 1983 *Multi Ethnic Education Review*) states that this issue 'traditionally has never been openly contested in either British academic or educational life' nor indeed in government or research establishments. Inevitably bias operates in social research as in all other research fields. However, within the context of the Council's Equal Opportunities Programme, and in view of the recognised imbalance in staffing this matter is being considered by the Equal Opportunities Unit and will be the subject of a further report to the Staff Committee. A team of black and white researchers would inevitably bring different life experiences and values to their work which would enrich the research process and would be more representative of the multiplicity of attitudes in society.

10 The Rastas need for help with grant applications and guidance to alternate sources of finance is an issue raised by large numbers of groups, including Rastas, in relation to the Council's grant making functions. The Ethnic Minorities Unit, as well as other units within the Council, provide such a service and there is obviously a case for making the availability of this support and development work more widely known.

Consultations with Rastafarians on a Programme for their Community

11 Officers within the Ethnic Minorities Unit have had some meetings with various Rasta groups to discuss this issue, but developments have been tentative. As and when further developments occur these will be reported back to Committee. In the Rasta community, as in the women's peace movement, there are no acknowledged leaders or representatives; consultations must proceed with caution.

Grants for Rastafarian Groups

12 There is a need to distinguish between grants which are awarded to black groups which include Rastas and those grants which are exclusively for Rasta groups. While it is thought that many of the grants have gone to black groups which contain Rastas, it is difficult to identify them. It is believed, for example, that many of the black arts groups such as Drum Arts and Unity in Motion, include Rastas. The Committee have made the following awards to predominantly Rasta Groups:

	1982-83	1983-84
	£	£
Abyssinian Society Newham	5,140	4,455
Rastafarian Advisory Centre Hammersmith & Fulham	2,595	—
Rastafari Universal Zion Haringey	21,000	25,000
	28,735	29,755

13 Applications from the Ethiopian World Federation Inc. Emperor Yohannes Local 33 and the Rastafarian Advisory Service are being processed for decision in 1983-84. Additionally, the Industry and Employment Committee have agreed to fund Rastafari Universal Zion Women's Group up to £3,740 in 1983-84. The Women's Committee Support Unit has had enquiries about funding a Rasta day nursery. The nursery group has not yet sent in an application.

14 Discussions with officers in various grant units (including the Ethnic Minority Unit) indicate that some officers are assisting in the development of various Rastafarian projects and it would only be clear later in the financial year how much assistance has been asked for. Rastas face the problem of other groups of competing for scarce resources: the value of grants sought from this Committee is more than ten times its budget (300 applications in 1983-84 totalling £26m are competing for £2.5m out of which £600,000 has already been committed from 1982-83 applications). It is probable that as some Rasta groups develop their projects with Council funding their success will stimulate and encourage other Rasta groups to apply.

Representations to the Home Secretary

15 The Government has been reviewing its policy concerning the recognition of Rastafarianism as a religion since the mid-1970s. In 1976 a Circular 'established that Rastafarianism would not be regarded as a religion for the purpose of Section 10 of the Prison Act 1952'. Further, the 1981 *Report on the Work of the Prison Department*, published in April 1982 states:

"The Prison Department is now reviewing its policy toward Rastafarian inmates, and giving particular consideration to the desirability of allowing further recognition of minority customs and beliefs, even when the faith cannot be accorded formal recognition as a religion. One difficulty has been that there is no central authority or point of reference for guidance on what constitutes Rastafarian custom and practice. Discussions are taking place with the Commission for Racial Equality and between the Commission and

Rastafarian and other groups. In the meantime the Home Secretary decided in November 1981 that wardens in detention centres – where the general practice is to require all inmates to have their hair cut short – should give Rastafarian inmates the opportunity to retain their "dreadlocks".

16 Correspondence with the Home Secretary's Adviser on Race Relations has established that up to 30 August 1983 the 'general position has not changed' in respect to the recognition of Rastafarianism as a religion. He adds that, 'I cannot of course predict what may happen in the future' in respect of recognition. However, several other points have been clarified. The review does in fact include all establishments within the penal service including detention centres and youth custody centres. (On 24 May 1983 borstals were abolished and their place taken by these new centres.) Official policy, as cited above, is that dreadlocks are not allowed. The Home Secretary's Adviser also writes that, 'head coverings are not allowed'. (The significance of this policy is demonstrated by the 1981 case of Abbená Simba Tola, a Rasta woman in Holloway prison who was not allowed a wrap to cover her head, or to keep her knees covered. As a result she alleged that she was abused and forcibly drugged.) The Home Office also writes that dietary needs present 'no difficulty or problem' since a vegetarian diet is available to Rastas.

17 The Home Office correspondence notes that:

'Provision for visiting ministers and services in prison would be dependent upon recognition of Rastafari as a religious denomination for the purposes of the Prison Act. There is, however, nothing to prevent individual Rastas acquiring devotional books and periodicals of their own account.'

A result of non-recognition is that individual Rastas would need to provide these services for themselves rather than having the Prison Department provide them from public funds.

18 In discussion with a wide range of organisations and individuals with contacts among black people in prisons, it has been suggested that the Home Office view is more sanguine than it should be regarding the treatment of Rastas in prison. Paul Gordon's recent book *White Law* cites several horrifying cases of Rastas in prison who were wrongly diagnosed as schizophrenic and were drugged and abused. The most well known case is the tragic one of Richard Campbell who died in Ashford Remand Centre in 1980 at the age of 19. This case is explained in the Research report in para 71.

18 The November 1981 directive might seem to have been a watershed. The Home Office view is that since that date (and the cases cited by Paul Gordon precede that date) no serious incidents have taken place in which Rastas were singled out for special treatment on the basis of their Rastafarian beliefs or practices. This is an area in which further monitoring, perhaps by a Rasta group, should be carried out.

20 In conclusion, all the evidence of the thinking of Ministers and officials at the Home Office seems to hinge on two 'difficulties' they experience. In the House of Commons on 16 April 1981 Patrick Mayhew, the then Minister of State said:

'There is no church or central organisation authority to whom one could turn for information about beliefs or dress. . . . Some Rastafarians belong to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and where that is so provision is made . . . In any prison members of that church are entitled to the facilities accorded to that religion.'

'Additional problems are that the movement has no recognisable leaders and there is no one authentic style for dress or hair. Long hair or "dreadlocks" . . . are not required as a mark of religious observance by the Ethiopian orthodox church. Therefore, great difficulties led to the decision being taken that Rastafarianism could not be recognised as a religion under the Prison Act.'

21 Despite these 'difficulties' it is useful to note that a recent Circular Instruction, 2/1983, from the Prison Department of 17 January 1983 to all Prison Department Establishments, provides guidance on the treatment of inmates belonging to religious and other minorities. It usefully sets out a schedule of permitted facilities relating to services, food, dress and work. In addition to providing notes on religious minorities there is also an Annex which lists facilities for Vegans who are recognised as requiring special treatment regarding diet and possibly extending to clothing. Rastafarians are included under the Ethiopian Orthodox Church heading which states that 'If as a Rastafarian, an inmate believes in the divinity of Haile Selassie I, he will *not* be accepted by the Ethiopian Orthodox priest.' In the schedule Vegans and Rastas are listed as non-religious minority groups. It states only that Rastas are vegetarians and that they should be given the opportunity to retain long hair ("dreadlocks"). No explanation of their faith is noted.

22 Despite advice from many outside bodies on this issue the Home Office has not yet made a decision on

recognition. Recognition as a religion is necessary and proper. In the interim, the Committee may feel that the prison service which can clarify the needs of non-religious minorities like Vegans could also clarify the faith and the needs of Rastas. The training of prison staff in race relations would be incomplete unless more information about Rastas is circulated and the particular needs of Rastas are acknowledged. The tragic consequences of ignorance must be avoided in future. The Committee may feel that it would like to recommend recognition to the Home Secretary.

Single Homeless Sub-Committee

23 The report was referred to the Single Homeless Sub-Committee. Officers servicing the Sub-Committee have said that they are providing assistance to organisations, like Ujima Housing Association which provide housing for young black people as well as Rastas. Currently they are not working with an exclusively Rastafarian group but an overwhelming majority of their tenants in short-life properties are Rastafarian males. Preliminary discussions have taken place with two or three Rasta Groups who have approached the Sub-Committee but more time would be required to develop their schemes up to the stage at which the Sub-Committee might consider them to be viable. Rastas do not seem to have had much experience in developing these kinds of schemes and the Committee may wish to recommend that the Single Homeless Sub-Committee consider the possibility of delegating responsibility for development work with black groups, including Rastas, to a specific post. It has been the experience in other parts of the Council that a development worker or a team of development workers is necessary to provide assistance to groups to reach the point of viability. Without such a worker it would seem problematic whether Rasta housing schemes for single homeless men and women will get off the ground.

Rastafarianism in Greater London

Introduction

1 In the past ten years Rastafarians have become increasingly visible in London as in Birmingham, Leicester, Bristol, Bradford, Leeds and in other cities. The immense popularity of reggae is one noteworthy manifestation of the Rastafarian presence. Current interest is shown by *The Observer* in prominently publishing in the summer of 1982 two articles on Rastafarianism.¹ These articles pander to popular misinformed prejudice and they put forward a viewpoint which is detrimental to understanding Rastafarians. The author, Shiva Naipul, suggests that Rastas are interesting because of their exoticism which he finds 'alluring and picturesque' and he goes on to suggest that they are a dangerous and menacing criminal class living on drug pushing. Sensational journalism does not advance understanding.

2 A Committee report, Rastafari Universal Zion (EM 83 (9.7.82)), noted that this particular Rastafarian group is trying to present 'an improved image of Rastafarians' and 'to promote greater understanding of their religion and life styles. These efforts have been considerably constrained because of limited resources.' Recognising that misinformation and lack of knowledge can easily lead to prejudice, this report is aimed at adding to the understanding of the Ethnic Minorities Committee, and others, about Rastafarians. It is hoped that the report will also help the Committee in forming views as a background to policy making, including possible grants to Rasta groups.

3 The report is based on information from published and unpublished works and from discussions and interviews with Rastafarians and with officers in statutory organisations. Research methods and sources of information are given in Appendix B and C and in the Bibliography.

4 It is difficult to define Rastafarianism precisely since there is a wide variety of contrasting views. Generally speaking the views of outsiders range across a spectrum from sympathetic to hostile and from regarding it as being a purely religious movement to that of a third world anti-colonial protest movement. A useful approach is to examine the historical development of the movement in Jamaica and in Britain and the beliefs and practices of Rastafarians.

Growth of Rastafarianism in Jamaica

5 Rastafarianism emerged in the 1930s in Jamaica but it cannot properly be understood unless one looks back, however briefly, at the history of Jamaica in which black consciousness was formed by the experience of slavery and British colonial rule.

Early History of the Slaves

6 After 150 years of Spanish rule the British colonised Jamaica in 1655. The British continued the trade in slaves that the Spanish had started. People were transported and turned into slaves. In time they constituted the majority of the island's population. The Africans in Jamaica resisted their position 'both passively and violently up until the abolition of slavery and beyond'.² The Maroons ('The wild and fierce ones') had been Spanish slaves who had been left to the English when the English defeated the Spanish. The Maroons 'sought freedom in the hill country where they fought a gruelling war to the death'.³ Their clever fighting tactics and ferocity forced the British to sue for peace as early as 1738. In this way, the Jamaican Maroon communities existed as a free people sixty-six years before the independence of Haiti and ninety-six years before slavery was abolished on the island.⁴ Other slaves ran away and joined in with the Maroons. They terrorised the English in the 17th and 18th centuries. It has been suggested 'that between the 17th and 19th centuries not a year passed without a slave rebellion or the threat of one'.⁵

7 During this early period the English planters did not share Christianity with their slaves. In their view to do so would have been tantamount to an admission that these black slaves had souls. Because of this view:

'African folk religion . . . was practised by the majority of black slaves until the early 19th century. The arrival of the non-conformist denominations and their efforts on behalf of the slaves during the period leading up to emancipation (1834) brought many people to those churches and led as well to the development of a variety of Afro-Christian sects which prospered in different forms alongside the more traditional missionary churches. 1860-61 saw a great religious revival throughout the island. The enthusiasm generated could not be contained in the churches; and it eventually led to a revitalised Afro-Christian movement known as Revival Religion. This was the principal religious expression among Jamaicans until 1929, when various Pentecostal Sects came to Jamaica from the United States. These sects quickly became popular, often attracting members away from the traditional churches as well as drawing people from the Afro-Christian sects'.⁶

8 Jamaica was to remain a poor and socially divided country in which ninety per cent of the people were of African origin but it was the mulatto class that dominated the economic, social and religious life of the country. English was the official language while the

majority spoke a Jamaican dialect. The traditional churches drew their membership primarily from the elite while the Pentecostals and Afro-Christian sects appealed to the black lower classes. The Rastafarian movement, when it eventually emerged, took root among the black semi-skilled workers and unemployed and in the shanty towns of Kingston.⁷

Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940)

9 It is important when examining the crucial role that Garvey played in the development of Rastafarianism to see him in the context of a continuing tradition of resistance to white domination and the building of pride in black consciousness. He came out of the Maroon tradition, and he knew of the earlier insurrections: the rebellion of one thousand slaves led by Tacky in 1760, and those led by native Baptist preachers, Sharpe in 1831 and Bogle in 1865. Both of these men preached 'equality before God for the black man'.⁸ Alexander Bedward in 1895 founded the Baptist Free Church and was one of a line preaching freedom for black Jamaicans. He 'preached an impending supernatural holocaust in which whites would be destroyed and blacks redeemed'.⁹

10 Garvey was 'one of the world's most renowned black leaders'.¹⁰ He was a Black nationalist who has been called the John the Baptist of the Rastafarian movement. During the two years he lived in London he developed an interest in African history. He was a powerful orator given to prophetic statements based on biblical sources. In time he took on messianic attributes for blacks in Jamaica, the United States and Africa. In 1914 he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association in Kingston 'whose purpose was to unite "all the Negro peoples of the world into one great body to establish a country and government all their own"'.¹¹ In 1916 Garvey went to the United States where he established a branch of the UNIA in Harlem. He spent his first three years in the States travelling around the country to speak and organising thirty branches of the UNIA in different American cities. He was preaching 'One God, one aim, one destiny'.¹²

'The flag of the UNIA was red, black and green – red for the blood of the race, shed in the past and dedicated to the future, black for pride in the colour of the skin, and green for the promise of a new life in Africa. The Association's leader was called the "Provisional President of Africa"; the God worshipped was the God of Ethiopia; and the overall aim of the Association was "African redemption"'.¹³

11 Garvey wanted to found a Black State in Africa, which was one of the reasons for establishing his

steamship company, the Black Star Line, which because of external factors eventually failed as a business but 'was an important symbol of the serious longing for a return to Africa'.¹⁴ He set up other black businesses including a co-operative chain of grocery stores. He was deported to Jamaica in 1927. Back home he founded the People's Political Party. His important statements included:

- (a) 'We, as Negroes, have found a new ideal. Whilst our God has no colour, yet it is human to see everything through one's own spectacles; and since the white people have seen their God through white spectacles, we have only now started out to see our God through our own spectacles . . . We Negroes believe in the God of Ethiopia . . . That is the God in whom we believe, but we shall worship him through the spectacles of Ethiopia'.¹⁵
- (b) 'It is apparent that it is left to the Negro to play . . . a part in human affairs – for when we look at the Anglo-Saxon we see him full of greed, avarice, no mercy, no love, no charity. We go from the white man to the yellow man, and see the same unenviable characteristics in the Japanese. Therefore we must believe that the Psalmist had great hopes of this race of ours when he prophesied "Princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia shall stretch forth his hands unto God"'.¹⁶
- (c) 'Africa for the Africans at home and abroad'.

And, in probably one of his most important statements just before he left for the United States in 1916, he is reported to have said in his farewell address:

- (d) "Look to Africa for the crown of a Black King, shall be the Redeemer."

To the Rastafarians this king was Haile Selassie'.¹⁸

1930s and After

12 Rastafarianism can therefore be said to have its inception in Jamaica. In November 1930 when Ras Tafari was crowned as the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords and the Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, followers of Garvey thought this might well be the fulfilment of his prophecy (see (d) above). Independently several other preachers developed the idea in the 1930s that Selassie was the Living God. It is thought that Leonard Howell was 'the first to preach the divinity of Ras Tafari in

Kingston'.¹⁹ Joseph Hibbert and Archibald Dunkley also were involved in developing this doctrine as well as being involved in the Missionary movement. In 1933 Dunkley preached Ras Tafari as the King of Kings, the Son of the Living God.²⁰

13 Between 1930 and 1933 the movement was incubated. Howell was intent on evangelism. During this period it appeared that the movement was seen as having taken on a radical revolutionary stance and Howell, Hibbert and Dunkley were all arrested in 1934. Following Howell's release he headed for the hills, like the Maroons had done, and set up a commune called Pinnacle. It is estimated that he had somewhere between five hundred and sixteen hundred members. In July 1941 the commune was raided, twenty-eight Rastas were sent to prison but Howell evaded the police. In 1953 Pinnacle was re-established. The men began to grow their hair in locks . . . They were called "locksmen", now known as "dreadlocks" or "Nattydread" but in their early period they were known as Ethiopian warriors'.²¹ Early in 1954 Pinnacle was again raided, 163 members arrested and the commune was destroyed. It is thought that Howell's followers from Pinnacle resettled in Kingston and Rastas became a visible presence there.

14 By the late 1950s the Rastafarians had become a popular movement in Kingston. The leading brethren thought it would be useful to assess its strength and possibly to unite the various cells and camps. In March 1958 the Rastafarian 'Universal Convention' (which the Rastas called *Grounation* or the *Nyabingi*) was called under the auspices of Prince Emanuel, one of the leading brethren. The gathering lasted a month and attracted considerable attention since a great deal of 'drumming, dancing and smoking the herb around a bonfire of old car tyres'²² took place. On 24 March some of the Rastas 'tried to capture the city of Kingston in the name of Haile Selassie'.²³ The police moved in on this event. It was one of a series of increasingly serious clashes with the police during this period. The Prince, in particular, was subject to much police harassment following the convention.

15 In 1959 Claudius Henry, who had been at the 1958 Convention, founded an organisation called the African Reformed Church which attracted many former Rastafarians. He was involved in printing, distributing and selling thousands of cards, at a shilling each, which were assumed by Rastas to be passports and tickets to return to Africa. The Kingston Daily Gleaner on 5 October 1959 reported that 'Hundreds of Rastafarians' met at Henry's house, having previously sold all their belongings, in anticipation of ships docking or planes

landing to take them back to Africa.²⁴ This 'Henry fiasco' resulted in his arrest. He was freed after paying a fine of £100. Following this incident 'Henry became increasingly hostile to the government. His previous religious stance became radical, revolutionary and militant. News began to leak to the police that Henry was planning a military takeover of the island'.²⁵

In April 1959 there was a police raid on Henry at the African Reformed Church in which a large arsenal of detonators, guns, ammunition, dynamite and other articles was seized.²⁶ Henry was imprisoned for six years for treason. Soon after this his son Ronald who had been training a guerilla band of Rastas in the hills above Kingston was caught, tried and sentenced to death. Several deaths on both sides were reported as a result of this incident.²⁷

16 As a result of these happenings Jamaican society began to take the Rastas seriously. For the first time the revolutionary potential of the movement had come to the surface.²⁸

'The confrontation of the cultist with the powers-that-be brought the need for a closer examination of the grievance of the poor of which the Rastafarians were only the cutting edge. At the request of the leading Rasta brethren, Dr Arthur Lewis, head of the University of the West Indies, authorized three of his best scholars to study the doctrines and special conditions of the Rastafarians and to make recommendations to the Premier of Jamaica on their behalf'.²⁹

17 The 1960 Study was regarded as 'a landmark in the history of the movement'³⁰ since it covered Rastafarian doctrines, history and their socio-economic background. It was also regarded by some of the Rastas as a useful 'mirror in which they could view themselves in relation to the Community. Others viewed it as the voice of the establishment'.³¹ The recommendations were useful in highlighting real grievances that the government could take on board. Norman Manley, Prime Minister of Jamaica, accepted them all and made attempts to carry them out. They are summarised below.

'(1) The government of Jamaica should send a mission to African countries to arrange for immigration of Jamaicans. Representatives of Ras Tafari brethren should be included in the mission.

(2) Preparations for the mission should be discussed immediately with representatives of the Ras Tafari brethren.

(3) The general public should recognise that the great majority of Ras Tafari brethren are peaceful citizens, willing to do an honest day's work.

(4) The police should complete their security enquiries rapidly, and cease to persecute peaceful Ras Tafari brethren

(5) The building of low-rent houses should be accelerated, and provision made for self-help co-operative building.

(6) Government should acquire the principal areas where squatting is now taking place, and arrange for water, light, sewage disposal and collection of rubbish.

(7) Civic centres should be built with facilities for technical classes, youth clubs, child clinics, etc. The churches and the University College of the West Indies should collaborate.

(8) The Ethiopian Orthodox Coptic Church should be invited to establish a branch in West Kingston.

(9) Ras Tafari brethren should be assisted to establish co-operative workshops.

(10) Press and radio facilities should be accorded to leading members of the movement'.³²

18 Barrett has suggested that 'almost all of the recommendations have been carried out to some extent over the years' and further that 'the present freedom of the Rastafarian movement on the island may to some extent be attributed to the far reaching insights of these recommendations'.³³ Not all authors or indeed all Rastas are equally enthusiastic about the report or this interpretation.

The Ethiopian World Federation (EWF)

19 An important development in the movement was the establishment of the Ethiopian World Federation in 1937 in New York. In 1938 a branch was established in Jamaica. The period from the mid 30s to the 50s saw the growth of many locals of the EWF as well as other groups connected with the movement. In 1955 the executive of the EWF in New York wrote to Local 31 in Jamaica 'informing them that the Emperor Haile Selassie I had granted "500 acres of very fertile and rich land . . . through the Ethiopian World Federation Inc., to the Black People of the West, who aided Ethiopia during her period of distress."'.³⁴ In 1955 Jamaican migration to Britain assumed major proportions.³⁵ There

was a belief among many Jamaicans at this time that repatriation to Africa might take place at any moment.

Haile Selassie I

20 When Haile Selassie visited Jamaica in 1966 it was a momentous event. 'Countless thousands turned up at the airport to welcome him in a demonstration the like of which Jamaica had not seen before'.³⁶ On 28 August 1975 Haile Selassie died, aged 83. Since it is a central Rastafarian belief that he is a living God this could have undermined the movement. The death was interpreted by some Rastafarians:

'as yet another white man's deception. Eventually other interpretations emerged: Ras Tafari had assumed another form, he had become more powerful in the spirit than he had been in the flesh, and he was present in the hearts of believers. In any case the important fact is that the death of Selassie did not undermine or destroy the Rastafarian movement'.³⁷

21 It should be noted that the above account of Jamaican and Rastafarian history is a summary derived from published works. Most Rastas with whom discussions took place referred proudly to this history. Some Rastas are as preoccupied with this history as they are with biblical texts; both studies are closely related to black consciousness and great pride in the African heritage. Nevertheless, the 'facts' are being examined by historians and it is expected that alternative views of this history will emerge. For example, it is suggested that there is no actual record of Garvey, having said: 'Look to Africa, there a black king shall be crowned.' It is expected that around March 1984 with Professor Robert Hill's book *The Complete Rastafarian Bible* (Bogle L'Ouverture Publications) will be published. It will show that the roots of Rastafarianism are broader and deeper than the secondary sources used in this report have suggested.

Rastafarians in Britain

22 It is important to note that relatively little, aside from Cashmore's book, has been published about the movement in Britain. Discussions were held with some Rastas who had been involved with the movement since the late 1950s and 60s to supplement published accounts. The nature of the movement is such (which will be discussed below) that there is no agreed 'standard version' of this recent past. The account below must be understood as a partial account derived from some Rastas' memory and from Cashmore. Some Rastas may well feel it needs a change of emphasis and fact. It is evident that this field needs more work.

Rastas themselves, especially young men and women, are to be knowledgeable as well as to inform the rest of society.

23 It is not clear when Rastafarians emerged in Britain. Sheila Patterson wrote of 'a Ras Tafari-orientated organisation, the United Afro-West Indian Brotherhood, which did not appear to develop on any large scale'. She records that in 1958, 'a group of bearded and conspicuously dressed young men were noted in the Brixton market area. Several local informants confirmed that they were Ras Tafarians'.³⁸ This seems to be the earliest record of Rastas in London. It should be remembered that in the mid 1950s in Jamaica Ras Tafari was still somewhat obscure and in Cashmore's terms, 'disreputable'. For this reason those who in Jamaica might have been Rastas might not have wanted to be identified when in London. Two Jamaican born London residents, Immanuel Foxe and Gabriel Adams (Wold), are credited with the birth of the movement in London. They developed the Universal Black Improvement Organisation (UBIO) which was modelled along Garveyite lines. The political wing of UBIO was called the People's Democratic Party (PDP). At this time UBIO and PDP were not specifically 'Rastafarian in doctrine, philosophy or ambitions... it was literally a mixture of Rastafarian concepts and themes built in to a neo-Garveyite structure'.³⁹

24 Cashmore suggests that after a trip back to Jamaica, Foxe and Adams were sanctioned to set up a local branch of the Ethiopian World Federation (EWF). (A Rasta elder in London suggested that this sanction was given after they had gone to New York in 1971 and then again in 1972). During this period UBIO and PDP were located in the North Kensington area and it was there that black youngsters became aware of Rastafarianism. Slightly later the lease expired and the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea gave them other premises on the Portobello Road.

25 The EWF was an African centred organisation which might be said to have nourished the cultural aspirations and development of the Rastas. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC) was 'the recognised religion of the Federation members'.⁴⁰ It had been introduced into Jamaica in 1969 and some Rasta elders have said that EWF paid the fee of an EOC priest to come to London. By 1971, Cashmore suggests, the movement could be seen as being shaped by EWF at the centre, with PDP as its political aspect and EOC as its religious aspect. In the late 1960s, against a background of the growth of the youth movement which

also attracted many British white youths, and the rise of the Black Power movement in the States and in Britain, the proselytising from North Kensington attracted numbers of West Indian youth to the Rastafarian movement which was predominantly a young working class men's movement. At that time international revolutionary student movements were becoming increasingly active and the air was electric with youthful rejections of the values of mainstream society coupled with a strong anti-authoritarian stance. In 1972 a second branch of EWF was established in Birmingham.

26 By 1973 the movement had a 'rather loosely assembled organisational structure and a small but growing membership'.⁴¹ Leadership was so diffuse and individualistic interpretations so rife that groups could form and splinter off as did the Twelve Tribes of Israel (which was also a branch of a Jamaican group). EWF did not have the organisational structure either to contain schisms or to 'absorb the growing popularity of Ras Tafari into its structure'.⁴² The growing influence of reggae music amongst blacks and whites, and its wide distribution was also partially responsible both for the diffusion of Rasta 'beliefs and values, ideals and ambitions'⁴³ and for further growth.⁴⁴

27 The EWF had received at this time the Head Administrator of EOC who carried out baptisms and appointed deacons. It published its own newsheet as did the Twelve Tribes. According to Cashmore 'the vast majority of young blacks were not interested in affiliating to any institution; the magnet was Rasta; as an EOC member put it: "Rasta is more exciting". Rastafarianism seemed to provide answers to black youths' questions about their subordinate position in British society and their repatriation in the future, to Africa.

28 It has been suggested that the group structure of the movement evolved out of the 'rude boy complex' of the 1960s.

'The rudies' affinity with the skinheads was founded upon principles of anti-authoritarianism, violence, racialism and short-run leaderism. The young rude boys, like their Jamaican predecessors, effected a weakening of ties to parents and brought into being for the first time in the history of the English black presence a cleft between first-generation migrants and their children'.⁴⁵

These loose groupings had a core of eight to twelve members and an outer ring of many more which pre-

figures the current groupings of Rastafarians. It was in these groups that young West Indian men forged a sense of group loyalty, the sense of the importance of the group as a unit and the practice of not submerging individualism. The 'regular and intense patterns of social inter-actions among young blacks'⁴⁶ in these groups provided ready-made channels for the communication of Rastafarian concepts and categories.⁴⁷ It was in these groups that 'reasoning sessions' took place.

29 By 1975 Cashmore suggests that

'Rasta had developed from an institutional phenomenon to the stage where it engulfed vast sections of the young West Indian community. The movement's magnetic attraction was undeniable; it drew devotees from the black working class of London, Birmingham, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester and Bristol, by then becoming increasingly familiar with the message of Bob Marley, Big Youth and Burning Spear ...'⁴⁸ and other reggae artists.

30 This continuing growth and the visibility of the Rastas was one of the reasons for two major attacks on the movement. In June 1976 the Reading Evening Post printed a story about 'a "West Indian Mafia organisation called Rastafarians ... an institutional crime ring specialising in drugs, prostitution, subversion and blackmail." Its syndicated members were said to favour fast cars, wear their hair in "long rat's tails" and "walk about with 'prayer sticks' – trimmed pick-axe handles".'⁴⁹ The story was ascribed to Scotland Yard but they denied knowledge of it. EOC brought legal action against the paper but nothing came of it. The paper did not publish a retraction.

31 Similarly the police in Birmingham were 'apprehensive' about the growth of the movement and their perception of deteriorating police-black relations. The West Midlands Police Force therefore commissioned John Brown from the Cranfield Institute of Technology to write a report on the situation in the Handsworth district. John Brown's report *Shades of Grey* attacked the Rastas as 'a dangerous "criminalised subculture" '⁵⁰ of about 200 youths who were 'mainly' responsible for a variety of crimes of violence against 'persons and personal property'.⁵¹

32 Some Rastas have suggested that, as mentioned above, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was associated with the growth of the movement, others disagreed. This is especially true during the period from 1973 to

1976 when the Church had branches in London and Birmingham. Its influence seemed to decline considerably after 1976 when the Church's Abba, in London, declared that members should discontinue their belief in the divinity of Haile Selassie I and that they should cut off their dreadlocks. This has been explained by an elder as the belief of an Ethiopian Orthodox Christian. The elder suggested that after Selassie had been overthrown by a left wing government the visiting Abba had first gone to Russia before visiting Britain. This visiting priest, with his mistaken interpretations of the New Testament, was responsible for the drift away from the Church. It has been suggested that although some members outwardly conformed they might not inwardly have changed.⁵²

33 At this juncture the Twelve Tribes of Israel prepared to accept the 'disenchanted'. As a result, 'came into its own in the UK and established itself as a force to be reckoned with'.⁵³ It was a focus for those who 'looked to it for realisation of repatriation to Africa, Ethiopia, Shashemane'. It appears that membership participation fell off after that initial phase but it has been reported that 'since 1980 Twelve Tribes has been reorganised'.⁵³

34 Currently the EWF is trying to organise and centralise the Rastafarian groups in London. In July 1981 Rasta International called a well attended conference in Brixton Town Hall.

'Five Rasta organisations were present at the conference. Apart from the host organ, there were also Rastafarian Universal Zion (RUZ), Tree of Life, Rasta Unity and Mind Soul and Body. Rasta International emphasised the need for repatriation now! RUZ emphasises the need for organisation and centralisation before repatriation! Eventually the conference accepted RUZ's position since it was more logical given the reality of Africa, Babylon, and the position of Rasta'.⁵⁶

35 The five groups were asked 'to ... get themselves into a united body' and to report back. On 12 September 1981 another meeting was held and it seems that agreement was reached that unity should take place under the EWF banner. In 1982 Local 33 West London was 'reformulated' 'within the cover of EWF Inc.' Bones goes on to write, 'I & I have prospective locals just waiting for the right time to put them in, so to speak'.⁵⁷ He adds, 'The EWF Inc. can, with the patience and wisdom, give Rastas the platform which I & I can obtain recognition and repatriation for so much work is there to be done!'

36 One Rasta elder said that, although many Rastas had left EOC in the 1975-76 period, in October 1982 with a different priest now in office there is currently a move backed by EWF to re-enlist Rastas into the fold of the EOC. Another event in October 1982 was this Council's meeting between the Ethnic Minorities Unit and the Rastafarian Community which was said to be 'an historic event' for the Rastafari movement.⁵⁹ It was chaired by Brother Mahitima Selassie, President of the national executive of the EWF and the Vice President of the national executive also spoke at length along with many other prominent Rastas. It was unanimously agreed that the meeting was only the beginning of a dialogue between the Rasta community and the GLC. Most important, it was also agreed that, 'the Rastafari community itself [should] meet together, draw up a set of overall and specific objectives, and present these to the GLC Ethnic Minorities Unit'.⁶⁰

37 The movement in Britain is characterised by its fragmentation and the diffuse nature of its leadership. Groupings have been loose and fluid and until fairly recently the movement had little contact with local authorities. If some degree of centralisation could be realised then it might be possible for the GLC and other statutory agencies to respond in a more positive way than has been possible so far.

38 Discussions with Rastas have shown a degree of alienation from white society. The early years of the movement, as noted above, were marked by an anti-authoritarian stance. All white man's institutions were thought to be part of Babylon and the Rasta asked for and got little from the system. Currently, Rastafarians in London simultaneously hold dichotomous beliefs in that repatriation shall happen soon or, as a variant, that Rastas should investigate possibilities for help in repatriation. The other belief held by some Rastas is not necessarily to reject the 'nation in exile' thesis but to work on the assumption that whether or not repatriation is sooner or later, Rastas must work for the welfare of their own community in the here and now. It is important, if the Rastafarian community chooses a network structure rather than a hierarchical one, that the various groupings are in contact, to learn from each other. Experience might well build up in the community, to be shared, in dealing with statutory agencies for equal treatment.

Rastafarian Beliefs and Practices

39 From the discussion of Jamaican history and the history of the Rastafari movement in Jamaica and in Britain several important beliefs of Rastas emerge. It is not possible to understand the functional quality of their

beliefs without this historical perspective. The cornerstone of the belief system for all Rastas is 'that Ras Tafari is the living God, and that salvation can come to black men only through repatriation to Africa'.⁶¹ In respect of most other beliefs and practices there are no hard and fast rules on 'required' practice. The explanation of this lies in the structure and organisation of the religion.

The Organisation of the Rastafarians

40 There is no all inclusive centralised, hierarchical structure or organisation which publishes encyclicals or sets of rules that must be obeyed or has machinery to review the theology of the movement or the practice of its members. The centralisation tendency which is noted above is entirely voluntary, has no real authority vested in it by adherents and probably speaks for only a small proportion of Rastas in this country, since most are probably unaffiliated in any formal sense to any particular group or local. In any case it is not there to define doctrine. It has been suggested that this loose-knit network is a 'radical democratic' structure which differentiates Rastafarianism from many religions which tend towards autocratic or authoritarian forms of organisation.

41 A possible explanation of this structurelessness relates to the celebration of a living God incarnate within each man, all of whom can speak directly to God. The man's body is the temple to be cherished and valued, and consequently there is no need for churches or particular places of worship. The faith is celebrated continually through the life style of each Rasta which is seen as an affirmation of his beliefs. Since each man has God within he can decide for himself what is right and proper.

42 Rastafarians spend long hours *reasoning* among themselves in their groups. At these sessions all sorts of matters can be discussed: theology, interpretations of biblical texts, prophecies, the experience of the religion and organisational and political matters can be raised by each member of the group. One does not go through a formal confirmation ceremony to become a Rasta – Rastas discover within themselves that they are Rastas. Potentially, it has been suggested, all black people are Rastas if they would but recognise it.

The Central Beliefs

43 The two central beliefs of the Rastafarians, that Ras Tafari is the true and living God and the belief in repatriation require amplification. The belief, or in Rasta terms, the 'knowledge' that Ras Tafari is divine is supported by numerous biblical texts which are read to mean that God is black:

'A Black God to the Rastafarians is of the greatest importance, because "Blackness is synonymous with holiness". The distinctiveness of Haile Selassie for the movement lies therefore in the authority of the scriptures of his divinity and in the fact that he is Black. His Ethiopian birth further strenghtens the belief, for the Bible clearly states that their God would be born in that country.

'The Rastafarians also belive that the Jesus spoken in the Bible is Haile Selassie. But the white slave masters and the missionaries present him as European in order to hide from the Black slaves their true dignity.'⁶²

44 It has been suggested by Barrett that the 'critical moment' in being a Rastafarian is that at which "acceptance" of Ras Tafari as the living God' takes place. He suggests that 'this constitutes the opening of new windows from which to look out at reality on what I choose to call the acquisition of new conceptual "maps". At this point "insight" is said to be achieved'.⁶³

45 From this insight other concepts emerge: the social organisation of the movement is characterised as a 'brotherhood' which differentiates it from 'a loose aggregation of individuals'.⁶⁴ The brotherhood notion relates to the Rastafarian use of I and I' which expresses 'the oneness of two persons . . . that God is in all men'.⁶⁵ In Rastafarian terms, 'God is both a deity and inherent in all men, thus providing a tie or link between all brothers'.⁶⁶

46 The concept of repatriation is a complex one reliant on the notion of Africa/Ethiopia ('Colonialism was responsible for "artificial divisions" of the continent') as a potent symbol of an important history and by way of cumulative Rastafarian reasoning, the site of their future, Zion. It is not clear whether, as Cashmore notes, Africa is a spiritual or intellectual focus for black poeple, or a geographical entity to which all blacks would eventually return. Rastas insist it is both: 'Repatriation is spiritual and physical', 'Africa is where all black men are descended from and so it's back to Africa we must go'; 'The only ambition of the Rastafarian movement is to see that all the black people of the western hemisphere return to their homeland'.⁶⁷ There would seem to be some agreement that Rastas need to recognise their African heritage. For many Rastas that seemed to be 'an inescapable part of the preparation for the physical return'.⁶⁸

Dread

47 Joseph Owen suggested that the key to understanding of the Rasta is his experience of 'dread' -

this relates to his historically denied black identity. The 'Song of Songs', 'Solomon's Song' suggests by the phrase 'I am black but comely, daughters of Jerusalem' that both Solomon and his Queen Sheba were black as were the Israelites, as was Jesus. The Rastas:

'exiled in Jamaica are a remnant of the black Israelite, and . . . God has appeared again in the form of a black king Haile Selassie, Emperor of a black nation, Ethiopia, which is the true Zion, in Africa, the original contental home of the black man and the cradle of civilization.

'The conviction that the black tribes of Africa dispersed and in exile, are the true "people of God" is based on a careful but selective reading of the Bible . . . Originally written on stone, in Amharic (the official language of Ethiopia), the Bible is seen to have been distorted by European translations, partly because of their lack of Amharic, and partially in a conscious effort to conceal from black people their true identity as the people of God. The Bible, even translation provides inspiration and instruction for Rastas; but it must be read selectively, with intuitive insight and in living communion with God. . . . [The struggle with the problems of figurative and literal meaning . . . and avoid literalism . . . the true Rastafarian, because of his inner wisdom, is guided to authentic interpretation . . . while the Bible is . . . important it is not absolute; . . . it must constantly interact with other forms of inspiration'.⁶⁹

The Bible

48 Rastas read the Bible with a cyclical and cumulative sense of time and history. The people and events in the Bible are part of contemporary history. Western civilization, which they reject since it has been an oppressive force in their history, is Babylon. Babylon has other specific meanings as well - the police, the courts, the state, the church, ministers of the church are all part of Babylon, 'the agents for the mental enslavement of the black man'.⁷⁰ Reading the Bible with 'knowledge' it is apparent that repatriation is the return to Zion; their homeland is Ethiopia/Africa and this repatriation represents the 'victory of Rastafari (which will come to pass'.⁷¹ Ethiopia is the heaven of the black man. Just as God, Jah (Jehovah) is alive and incarnate man, not a 'spirit in the sky', so true heaven is a real place here on earth.

The Concept of God

49 Since God for the Rastafarians is a God of life they do not believe that a righteous man can die. Death is the result of man's evil ways'⁷² as for example in

murder. 'Let the dead bury their dead'. They believe the traditional conceptions of death and after life to be a deception. Their

'concept of reincarnation, which is not rebirth after death but repeated incarnations, concrete manifestations of an enduring person through many generations. A man may take on different forms, and may at times disappear, but he remains the same person. Thus some would see a single divine identity running through Moses, David, Solomon, Jesus and Haile Selassie, all of whom are black and are the same person. This concept of reincarnation is the basis of the Rastafarian belief that they themselves are the Israelites of the Bible and that they are still Africans despite being born in Jamaica [or Britain]. Thus history became cumulative, each moment summing up the past; and biblical history is reincarnated in the form of contemporary events'.⁷³

The Concept of Nature

50 The concept of nature is an important one based on the rationale that the body is the temple of God for the Rastas. It covers a broad spectrum of their beliefs and practices. In their view the 'laws of nature' must be followed. The earth is good and we must guard against pollution of it with chemicals or other unnatural substances. Most Rastas are vegetarians, eating natural or I-tal (organic) food. Pork is 'prohibited not only because of the Biblical injunctions against it but also because of the animal's known susceptibility to disease, its insanitary habits and "it eats anything at all man, anything, and that not good for you"'.⁷⁴ They guard against processed food which they see as a cause of illness. They also do not eat shellfish. Many Rastas do not believe in drinking alcohol because 'it mixes up a man's mind. That's how they tricked our fathers into becoming slaves, by getting them drunk'.⁷⁵

Ganja

51 The use of cannabis ('ganja', the herb) which arises from a Jamaican tradition to use it generally for medicinal and cultural reasons, is another example of this close affinity with nature. It is seen as God's gift and Rastas will quote Biblical references 'to show that not only does God smoke it, but that it comes from the tree of life and is of positive benefit'.⁷⁶ It is an important part of their religious practice, compared by some with a sacrament, comparable to the chalice or communion cup or the use of incense in the Catholic Church. Rastas 'see ganja as bringing wisdom, assisting meditation and prayer, bringing about greater communion with the brethren, and possessing medicinal qualities'.⁷⁷

Beards and Locks

52 Beards and locks are seen as another expression of nature, a 'sign of consecration of Jah and of the covenant with Him'.⁷⁸ Texts from the Bible are also used as justifications of this practice. 'Locks are a form of natural life, and are seen to resemble the lion's mane and the hair of the African warrior, and to symbolise the way of Christ and the Prophets related to the story of Samson's hair and his destruction of the Philistines.' It has been suggested that 'the effect that the uncut hair and beard created was awesome, dreadful and hence the term "dreadlock"'.⁷⁹

Reggae

53 It is important to note the influence of reggae. Campbell, in discussing the brutality of the Jamaican government response to Rastas, suggests that reggae began to emerge towards the end of the 1960s. Out of the black oppression in Jamaica,

'the poor masses and the Rastas were united in their need to assert their own culture, their own black dignity. They created new people's institutions called sound systems, usually a dance held in a big yard with bamboo fences, where the Rasta culture of resistance was developed without restraint . . . Songs sung by the Rastafari which extolled Ethiopian and African history were developed within these people's institutions. Socio-religious and political songs echoed and reverberated . . . The music of Rasta . . . conveyed the people's defiance. Despite their intent of spiritual deliverance, the songs were pregnant with social criticism'.⁸⁰

Reggae has been seen as a medium in which pride in being black is projected. 'Reggae builds up a black consciousness of class and colour. It tells true life stories; it contemplates on and reflects black experiences; it teaches and it commands the listening ears of the young black'.⁸¹ Bob Marley and the Wailers and the many groups that form and disperse have been important figures within the development of the Rastafari expression of beliefs, prophecies, commentaries and exhortations.

Men and Women

54 The separate and distinct roles that men and women are expected to play are also tied to the concept of 'the natural'.

'Rastafarianism is a male-orientated and male dominated religion. Negative associations and myths are invariably embodied in the stories about the seductive nature of woman. The role of the woman is

that of an individual queen to her partner. Fidelity is expected of her, and any sexual misdemeanours forbidden by the Old Testament, which is also used to prove the acceptability of male infidelity. Birth control is rejected as a white ploy to murder black people, contravening the Old Testament prophecy that "the seeds of Israel shall be numberless".⁸²

55 This view is amplified: 'one Rasta put it quite bluntly: "Woman was given unto man for man's use. God is man and man is God, so how can a woman be equal to a man" and further "It's the women's duty to help the man in all ways, the man's duty to help the women in some ways".'⁸³ The moral concept of nature, an important element of the Rasta belief system, leads one to see women's highest role as wife and mother. Makeda Lee, in the *Caribbean Times* in June 1982, wrote:

'Woman is the female half of MANkind . . . woman's chief role is to carry the seed of life in the womb and perpetuate Mankind – thus we are Man with wombs – wombMan. We are NOT – as some men erroneously claim – inferior because we are not Man. In fact we are very much MANkind, half of a whole which is only complete when the two halves are united. Each half of Mankind has a part to play in the creation of life and the continuation of the species – Man carries the fertiliser for the seed woman produces.

'Western Woman has moved far from her main role as life bearer, preferring to function as a virtually sexless cog in the production machine of Capitalism. She resents her role as home-maker and guider of the family, which is why this society has produced so many disoriented children – lacking in discipline and a sense of family and love; mixed-up homes – where wives dominate male partners who may not be earning as much as the wife; wives who feel that their hard work outside the homes gives them the right to neglect the care of the home . . . it is "work" [outside the home] that intrudes on her true work – that of being a woman in the fullest sense . . . there is no greater title I bear than that of wife, and there is no job at which I work harder . . .

'Yes, we obey our husbands, for the Bible teaches that the Man is head of the Woman, just as God is head of the Man . . . it is fitting that we should honour his wise advice, for he is out there in the world with more experience than we, simply by being born a Man . . .

'In dress, we cover the main body areas which could excite Man to carnal thoughts, for we do not wish to evoke the carnal in Man, but the Spiritual.'⁸⁴

While the author of these views is held in high esteem in the London Rasta community some Rasta women do not necessarily subscribe to all of these views. It is the nature of the movement that divergent views can be held between individuals and groups.

56 During menstruation Rasta-women are considered unclean and they are not expected to prepare or serve food nor to have sexual intercourse. It has been suggested this is a 'moral' rather than a physical law. Homosexuality 'was stringently decried as "unnatural" and "ungodly" as was birth control'⁸⁵ and abortion, both of which were seen as part of the Babylonian conspiracy . . . 'the antipathy toward feminism, homosexuality and birth control were to be seen as vilifications of the "moral decline of the west" which slide into decadence which heralded the imminent collapse of Babylon in much the same way as it did the Roman Empire: "A moral decline in the West has caused women to embark on a road of women's lib"'

Colours

57 Rastafarians are frequently seen wearing red, black, green and gold colours. These are a mixture of the colour symbolism of Pan Africanism and Ethiopia's national colours. These colours may be in their 'Crowns' which cover their locks or in bracelets or as decorations or markings of other articles of clothing. 'The colours have great significance:

Red represents the blood of the martyrs, the slave and the brethren.

Black represents the skin; it is synonymous with holiness, fire and creativity.

Green is for Ethiopia, and for the Ganja herb, and Jamaica.

Gold is for the Rastafarian faith and for Jamacia'.⁸⁷

Language

58 Rastafarians use a language which clearly differentiates them from other Jamaicans. While it is largely based on Jamaican patois it also incorporates special 'I and I' words. 'It takes elements from available languages, particularly Jamaican creole, ghetto dialects, Old Testament English, Standard English and the language of hallucination.'⁸⁸ These are often called 'Afro-Lingua' in Britain.

59 It has been suggested by Cashmore that, 'the locks, the colours and the speech form were strategic

in the creation and maintenance of distinctiveness and exclusivity'.⁸⁹ 'These three basic symbolic strategies . . . [made] the presence of the Rastaman visible and audible; they were dimensions of social bonding which brought the Rastas together in a series of attachments and took them further from the wider society in a series of detachments . . . that they were "in" but not "of" Babylon promoted the all important consciousness of belonging to a social group that was . . . separated from the rest of society and would remain untainted and not infected by Babylon'.⁹⁰

60 In summary: while the discussion above has focussed on aspects of the belief system of Rastafarians it is not possible to suggest with precision or authority what is central or what is peripheral to the religion. Williams, for example, suggests that as a 'result of members' freedom in interpretation . . . the initial beliefs have been considerably adapted as social and religious strategies have altered'.⁹¹ He suggests that there were six central ideas in 1953, four in 1960 and two in 1961:

- 1 Ras Tafari is the true and living God
- 2 Salvation for the black man can only come through repatriation to Africa, i.e., Ethiopia'.

In 1981 it is probable that while all Rastafarians would agree with the first belief, only half would believe in repatriation to Africa; but for most, "redemption by repatriation", continued to be desirable, even if the journey is spiritual rather than earthly.⁹²

61 It is difficult, given the loose structure of the organisation and the freedom for individual interpretation, to accept Williams' precision of interpretation of what are 'central beliefs'. Presumably over time and in different places, emphasis differs amongst different individuals and groups. Cashmore pinpoints this problem by suggesting that 'the belief system . . . remained broadly based and amenable to differential interpretation, adaptation, supplementation and abridgement'.

'The belief system of Ras Tafari was so vague and loosely defined, even at its inception, due to its lack of a single authoritative voice, that what was to be acceptable doctrine was largely a matter of individual interpretation. Never in the history of the movement had there been a leader effective enough to impose an unambiguous interpretation and so make demands on members in such a way as to establish clear boundaries. Instead there existed

few demands and no distinction between members and non-members (technically, at least). This introduced the problem of distinguishing what constituted the typical Rastaman . . . [It] had a very transient membership, usually an expanding one.'

'Lacking in centralised authority, the Rastas were never able to organise themselves in sectarian models and, therefore, faced problems of control which continuously threatened to dissolve the membership and render it a loose congregation instead of a warrantable movement'.⁹³

How many Rastafarians are there in Britain?

62 From this discussion it becomes clear that this question is largely meaningless. There is, as was suggested above, no organisation with records, nor is it possible to know who regards him or her self as a Rasta. It is also true that there may well be those with dreadlocks who do so for fashion or political or other reasons, or those who do not show visible signs who are in fact deeply committed. In 1978 John Plummer said, 'it is difficult and not really important, to count heads, as the fact is that all can see the growth of the movement. As a Rasta said: "We are everywhere: we are growing"'.⁹⁴

Attitudes of Non-Rasta Blacks and Whites

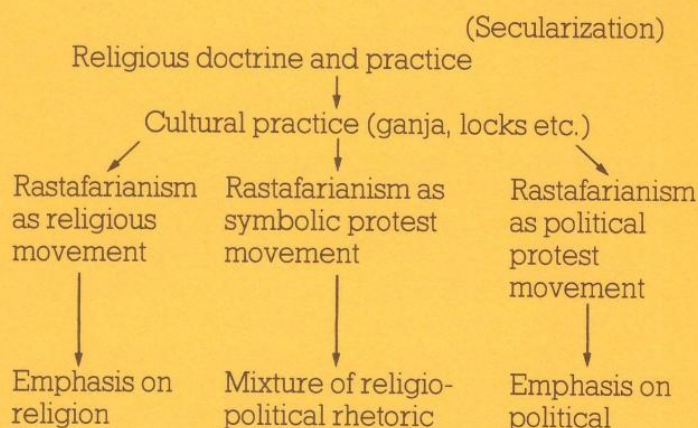
63 One can expect black and white people in Britain to hold a wide variety of views on Rastas chiefly dependent on their position and their perception of that position in mainstream society. Lord Scarman, in his Report on the Brixton Disorders, has written:

'The Rastafarians, their faith and their aspirations, deserve more understanding and more sympathy than they get from the British people. The true Rastafarian is deeply religious, essentially humble and sad. His philosophy is striving towards a people's identity. His aspiration – the return to Africa from exile in "Babylon" (a deliberate echo of the exile and lost tribes of Israel) – is embodied in a religious and peaceful discipline. He believes it is as legitimate to smoke cannabis as to drink alcohol – and less likely to lead to unruly behaviour) but as Mr Jah Bones made clear in his evidence, the true Rastafarian accepts the law of the land'.⁹⁵

64 Some Rastas, while recognising Scarman's views as essentially sympathetic take exception to some of these ideas. The notion that one can distinguish the 'true' from the 'false' Rasta is not, they believe, a concept applied to other religious groups. A Rastaman is self defined and this autonomy, which is important to

a Rastaman, is threatened by external definitions. Secondly, to be defined as 'essentially humble and sad' is extraordinarily limiting. Several young Rastas while recognising the endemic racism in British society are more optimistic than sad and quite clearly not humble.

65 Miles' view is that the several strands of the movement can be represented diagrammatically.⁹⁶



66 Miles' analysis suggests the core religious beliefs, based on interpretations of the Bible, gave rise to a set of religious practices within the Jamaican socio-economic context in which Rastafarianism developed.

The practices are:

'implicitly cultural and political, and not only form the basis of a religious movement, but can also become the means of expression of protest about social and economic deprivation or part of a more formal political movement, following a re-evaluation and secularization of the religious doctrine. In the case of Rastafarianism as a symbolic protest movement, it is the symbols that are most significant (for example, dress, personal appearance, music and language which, together, constitute a distinct style of life), although they may be supported by religio-political rhetoric; but there will be no participation in religious ritual or formal political activity. In the case of Rastafarianism as a political movement, the Rastafarian symbols do serve as an expression of difference, but it is the advancement of a clear political doctrine and strategy, partly derived from religious doctrine, which distinguishes this form of Rastafarianism from the others; Rastafarianism, thereby, becomes a vehicle for a politics of black nationalism. Thus, both of these forms share certain visible symbols with Rastafarianism as a religious movement, but the latter is distinguished by active participation in religious ritual . . . the major

significance of Rastafarianism in England is as movement of protest. The symbols and cultural practices of Rastafarianism assist a positive affirmation of blackness in black youth . . . who faced with the related problems of *inter alia* disadvantage and discrimination'.⁹⁷

67 Miles goes on to argue against the 'between cultures' concept which suggests that immigrants and their children find their culture devalued or in need of modification in the host country. From such a concept alienation would follow if these minorities are neither part of the receiving society nor of their country of origin. If that is so then 'social policies should aim to "integrate" them'.⁹⁸ His examination of Rastas leads to suggest that Rasta youth by their forms of protest have positively valued their blackness, escaped the role of 'victim and are not 'immobilized by the contradiction of being "between two cultures"'.⁹⁹ He suggests that the various aspects of Rasta style are bound up in the black pride and 'defiance of white definitions of acceptable appearance'. Rastafarianism must therefore be seen as a new and most creative cultural tradition¹⁰⁰ which can be seen as challenging 'their ideological and material subordination by reality of this new cultural tradition'.¹⁰¹

68 It is probable that for most people and groups in both black and white society there is ignorance of Rasta history, beliefs and practices and as is usual, ignorance often leads to suspicion of the unknown. Dreadlocks, 'unusual' speech patterns, the wearing of the colored clothing and the use of the herb may lead some to fear and distrust Rastas in a generalised sense. For others, specific aspects of the Rastafarian value system and style, such as their pride in blackness may elicit extreme positive or negative views as well might views on homosexuality and on woman's 'natural'.

69 Rasta views of women's role are explained as follows. These views are traditional ones, out of step with the European view that women must be accorded equal status and opportunity with men. From this position it follows that all women should have the right to choose from as wide a range of roles as men and that role choices should not be restricted to childbearing, motherhood, housekeeping and the psychological support of men in traditional roles.

70 There is some evidence in the literature and in conversation that many young black people are discovering themselves to be Rastas have been, and initially, rejected by their families, or some members of their family. Some older blacks feel that Rastafarianism is a threat to their family.

youth are not 'respectable', are 'asking for' white disapproval, giving all blacks 'a bad name' because of their non-conformity to mainstream white culture. The implicit criticism of older blacks' position in white society can give rise to hostility of older blacks towards the movement.

71 Rastafarians believe that there are several areas in which white society has dealt harshly with them. There is clear evidence that Rastafarians have been discriminated against in education.¹⁰² In penal institutions a range of problems has arisen from the fact that the Prison Department does not recognise Rastafarianism as a religion. Consequently the Prison Service does not provide devotional books from public funds, as is the case with 'recognised' religions, nor does it provide for access by visiting ministers or the holding of Services. (See para 94 below for reference to the relevant Home Office Circular Instruction.) Following on from non-recognition difficulties have been experienced in relation to diet, dreadlocks and covered heads (of Rastawomen). More serious have been the cases cited by Paul Gordon in *White Law* in which devout Rastas have been diagnosed as schizophrenic and consequently, they have alleged that, they have been drugged and abused in prison.

The most well known case is the tragic one of Richard Campbell who died in Ashford Remand Centre in 1980 at the age of 19. The Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council convened a public inquiry, led by Tom Cox, MP. As against the official statements that Richard Campbell had died of dehydration due to schizophrenia, and the later coroner's verdict of 'death by self neglect' due to schizophrenia, that inquiry's findings were far different. The inquiry noted that after careful consideration of all the evidence, the drugs used, the unsuitability of Ashford Remand Centre for proper psychiatric assessment and diagnosis and the prison authority's 'hostile interpretation of Rastafarianism', 'We cannot accept as proven that Richard was schizophrenic or that schizophrenia, in any way, contributed to his death'. The report of the inquiry pinpoints instead the 'failure by the authorities': the legal profession, the probation service and those at Ashford. Ashford was seen as most culpable on eight counts, the first two of which were labelling Richard Campbell schizophrenic and secondly refusing to recognise Rastafarianism as his valid religion. The inquiry recognised Rastafarianism as:

'A legitimate expression of the beliefs of many British citizens. We call for it to be recognised as a religion within the penal system and the prison employees to

be trained to have an understanding and respect for the language, rituals and dogma of the religion.'

In June 1982 Lord Elton replied to Lord Avebury in the House of Lords that the Home Office is considering whether 'Rastafari should be recognised as a valid religion and that Rastafarians in penal institutions should be allowed the same privileges as are accorded to other religious believers'.¹⁰³

72 The issue of special discrimination against Rastas was one of several discussed with Rastas. The section below will explain their response to these questions and others. It is important to recognise that Rastas do pose a difficult dilemma both to mainstream white society and equally to themselves. If Britain is Babylon and therefore its institutions are to be rejected by Rastas, and if suffering and oppression are only to be ended by repatriation to Zion/Ethiopia/Africa what then is to be done in the here and now and by whom, for whom? Is it appropriate for Rastas and/or white people to work to effect change?

Attitudes of Rastas and of Service Providers

73 As explained in Appendix B the sample of people with whom discussions took place was limited; they are listed in Appendix C. The discussions were structured around a series of questions, listed as Appendix D but were kept open ended since most of the Rastas had issues they wanted to raise relating to projects they were involved in and 'various aspects of Rastafarian life style'.¹⁰⁴

Central Beliefs

74 Perhaps because there were no direct questions about the Rastafarian belief system no Rasta chose to discuss the divinity of Haile Selassie I, although a few referred to the Living God and spoke of Rastas as the true Israelites'. Repatriation was raised by a few but the interpretation of this concept differed. The impression was not given that any of the Rastas expected to be off to Ethiopia shortly. Some did talk about preparation for repatriation and this was seen in two ways. First the need for various individuals and groups to learn to work together and secondly the need for education and training. This aspect will be explained below. For others, repatriation did not emerge as a central concern.

75 At the October 1982 meeting between the Rastafari community and this Council's Ethnic Minorities Unit several Rastas chose to raise the repatriation issue. They suggested it as a priority goal for all Rastafarians. The question raised was whether

this Council could assist in establishing 'a Repatriation Trust Fund and the sending of a research team to Africa to look into the whole question'.¹⁰⁵ Following up this discussion in private with Rastas who had been at the meeting one found less than unanimous support for spending money, if it were possible, in this way. Some thought it far more important to get on with other projects, to be discussed below, while others were firm in their belief that repatriation is a priority.

The Organisation of Rastafarians

76 All but one of the Rastafarians spoken to were in groups and he, new to London, was thinking about affiliation. It is clear that those Rastas who agreed to an interview were within groups not entirely hostile to mainstream society. One Rasta said that all Rastas are in groups. The impression was given that the functions of the groups differed. Several Rastas spoke about reasoning in their groups. All seemed to provide social, cultural and religious support and sharing. Some of the groups were involved in community development projects and had ambitious plans for the future. It also emerged that during the last three years great efforts have been made toward unification and centralisation.

The Concept of Nature

77 Several Rastas spoke about *dietary habits* and the need to avoid processed food and to keep to an I-tal, natural, mainly vegetarian diet. The impression was given that for some Rastas this issue is much more important than for others since some of the groups included members who were not exclusively vegetarian. All agreed that processed food was bad for you but there seemed leeway for individual interpretation in this field as in most other Rasta beliefs. Two Rastas spoke about some of the young Rastamen lacking sufficient knowledge about a balanced I-tal diet and saw this leading to serious illness. One Rasta sympathiser spoke about the problems caused to pregnant and nursing women with an insufficiently balanced totally vegetarian diet. Most, if not all, of the Rastas thought alcohol was bad for you. Those who did drink thought it must be done in moderation. Some drank neither tea, nor coffee, nor cow's milk.

78 Most of the Rastas spoken to thought that *ganja* was important to their religious practice. Some mentioned the medicinal qualities of the herb and those who raised the issue thought that its use should be legalised. Most knew individual Rastas who did not take the herb in any form.

79 *Beards and locks* were worn by all the men spoken to and locks by most of the women. Some, but

not all of the women kept their heads covered. Neither the men nor the women dressed in any way significantly different from the rest of mainstream society. Some of the Rastas wore the *colours* but not

80 *The role of women* was discussed. Some of the Rastamen took the Makeda Lee line (quoted in paragraph 55 above). The women for the most part saw child bearing as an important part of their lives but it emerged that all of them had managed to limit the number of children they had. One woman spoke of it as a sacrifice she had made to enable her to get on with the organising work she was doing within her Rasta group. Although in some meetings the issue of sharing housework and childcare was raised this did not seem to be an important issue to the women spoken to. One did not get the impression that the women's liberation movement or feminism had reached them in a significant way. Several of the women spoke of the extremely active role they played within their groups. Indeed, some seemed to have taken on formidable leadership responsibilities which gave them a degree of equality in organising and in reasoning sessions. Several spoke of the attitudes of men as in need of change but this was always said in a light-hearted way. The impression emerged that in this small sample of women seemed more highly trained and educated than the men. It was also apparent that for many of those spoken to being a Rastafarian and working within the movement was a central fact of life and worth great personal sacrifice if need be.

Numbers and Concentrations of Rastas

81 Neither the Rastas nor the service providers thought that Rastas were more concentrated in particular areas of London than the Afro-Caribbean population as a whole. It was thought that those boroughs, or small areas within boroughs, which contain many Afro-Caribbeans would contain more Rastas than other areas. The impression was given that Rastas are fairly mobile within London, attending gatherings or smaller meetings, or personally visiting other parts of London. They also seem to have links with Rasta groups in other cities and visit or are visited by them. One Rasta hazarded a guess of 20,000 to 30,000 Rastas in London but he, along with the others, agreed that it would be difficult to define who is or is not a Rasta. They also agreed that the figure was probably meaningless.

Difficulties for the Rasta Community

82 Most of the Rastas spoke of unemployment as their most intractable problem. Many said that black people face greater problems in getting jobs than whites and that Rastas are more discriminated against.

than other blacks. This seemed especially true in respect to the young men whose locks and beards made them more visibly Rastafarian than the young women and therefore to many employers, more unacceptable. No one in the Rasta community or among the service providing sectors knew of any Rastas working in central or local government offices in direct contact with the public. Some service agencies thought that it would be extremely helpful if Rastas would consider such a career especially in social work, community work, education, and in the health service.

83 Several of the groups interviewed explained their desire to enter into the employment field either by way of providing non-profit making services to their own community or by establishing 'self-help projects, co-operatives, educational facilities, arts and crafts projects, and greater and fairer assistance to establish businesses on a commercial level'.¹⁰⁶ Several of the service providers said they would like to see Rastas in local authority offices and several of the Rastas agreed that they would find such jobs useful and acceptable places of employment. One education officer involved in interviewing youth workers for a job in a non-statutory youth club had to watch, powerless, when the Church that ran the club refused to hire a young Rastafarian he had suggested as the best candidate because of assumptions about his future behaviour. There can be little doubt that Rasta appearance, speech patterns, and practices are viewed with considerable suspicion by many sections of the white community. For this reason, in addition to employment by local authorities in the health service or on voluntary projects a great deal more needs to be done to enable Rastas to establish their own industrial and commercial enterprises. The kind of assistance needed probably does not differ from that which is carried out by economic development units in this Council or by other local authorities. It is important that good ideas and projects should be nurtured to the point of commercial viability.

84 There were mixed feelings among Rastas about the adequacy of the *social services*. Two Rastas spoke about the problems of youngsters from Rasta households who had been taken into care. These children are subjected to a totally different system of values, different codes of conduct, different food, and almost always a much more affluent life style than their Rasta parents can provide. If and when these children are to return home it is likely to be extremely traumatic. One Rasta suggested that the seeds of mental illness could be sown by such an experience. If the Government were to change the rules (as is now under

consideration) governing fostering payments being deducted from supplementary benefits it would make it much more likely that other Rasta families might well be interested in becoming part of the fostering service. There was little discussion about other aspects of social services. It was clear that there was limited knowledge about the full range of services available.

85 Closely related to social services is *community development*. Several of the Rasta groups, as mentioned above, have developed more or less ambitious community development projects. Most had had little or no help from the local authority. Several told stories of being directed from one department to another, from one committee to another, to different sections of a single department and to different officers. One officer mentioned the difficulty, within a single local authority, of getting the support and active co-operation from other departments that would be required if schemes were to succeed. Property and running costs were the chief difficulties. This whole area of interdepartmental co-operation, discrete departmental budgeting, and the need to define projects in committee/departmental terms needs further exploration. There was no evidence of a local authority taking special care of Rastas. Many of the problems they raised were not particular to their community but are shared by most groups asking for help. Most of all, the local authorities' ability to undertake development work with ethnic minority groups like Rastafarians is another area in which further work is required.

86 *Education* can be seen to be a minefield both by the Rastafarians (some of whom saw it this way) and by the education officers spoken to. Fundamentally, it can be understood in Barrett's terms as, 'the opening of windows from which to look out at reality on what I chose to call the acquisition of new conceptual "maps"'.¹⁰⁶ Some of the Rastas see this conceptual map as racist, primarily Christian, European cultural propaganda. Educationalists in general see it as passing on the values of a culture in which the education itself should help to open all sorts of doors, especially economic ones, and further a range of choices and opportunities within that culture. Those people/groups who choose not to take part may risk limiting their children's access to mainstream opportunities in the future.

87 In concrete terms Rastas are worried about poor educational achievements; youngsters being disciplined for wearing crowns; the religion not being accepted as legitimate, and specific concerns about the

curriculum itself: the lack of black studies in general and the lack of black history in particular which is of tremendous importance to many Rastas. The Inner London Education Authority is responding to these concerns by an emphasis on multi-ethnic education. Since 1977, when ILEA's policy document 'Multi Ethnic Education' was produced, there has 'been a great amount of development in the Authority and especially in some of the shools and colleges.'¹⁰⁷ These developments have been seen by some as 'fragmentary and peripheral'¹⁰⁸ and they argue 'that it should be central to the curriculum debate'.¹⁰⁹

88 To summarise, it would seem necessary that Rastas and education authorities should initiate discussions to take account of Rasta demands and the authorities' views toward developing options for Rastafarians which both can see as acceptable and viable.

89 Allied to education is *training*. Several of the community development projects initiated by Rastas include training for young people in woodwork, arts and crafts, music etc. It is apparent that some of this training should have been part of the education the youths should have had in the schools. Secondly, some of the training ought to be supported or funded by the education authorities/MSO; few, if any, of the groups have had this sort of help mostly because of the difficulties of complying with the requirements of such statutory organisations and partly because of the problem of suitable buildings. Above all, it seems that the authorities ought to have black development officers to work with Rasta groups in this field, as well as in the development of community/arts/recreation centres.

90 *Housing* was discussed by Rastas only as a peripheral issue. They consider that black people tend to get the least and the worst local authority housing. They said, without too much conviction, that Rastas faced worse prospects even than other blacks. With the association between Rastafarianism and youth, it can be expected that they would suffer to the same, or even to a greater degree, the problem of homelessness that is a growing feature among young single people. Hostels catering for young single homeless people report an increasing demand for accommodation from this group, many of whom are unemployed and have left their parental homes. How many are Rastas is not known, and unless Rastas are willing to identify themselves as Rastas it would not be possible to make an estimate. This is, however, an area which should be further investigated including whether or not they should have separate provision.

91 Involvement in *housing associations* and *housing co-ops* was mentioned by one or two Rastas as an area of work they would like to develop so that their members would have access to better housing. Similarly there was some discussion about *co-op workshops* and other sorts of *industrial/commercial co-ops*. This is an area in which local authorities could obviously provide support to help Rastas develop their own schemes, which would have the effect of providing jobs for Rastas and a useful service for the Rasta community. This should be linked with the support referred to above.

92 The discussion above has concentrated on services which for the most part are wanted, if the delivery could be modified in particular ways to meet Rasta needs. Almost more important to Rastas than those, are the unwanted attention Rastas attract from the police on the streets, in the courts, in borstals (called Youth Custody Centres), detention centres and prisons. Almost without exception every Rastaman some of the Rastawomen spoken to had had a hostile encounter with the police. All felt that they were treated on because they were Rastas and that trumped up charges were brought against them. A wide range of stories were told from being stopped for driving a car which was considered 'too new' for a Rastaman to (it was seven or eight years old), to abusive treatment on the streets, to police raiding a private party, for no reason, and then charging people with obstructing the law. In the latter case, possession of marijuana was frequently put forward by the police as the reason for the raid but the alleged brutal treatment of the Rastas would seem to be little related to such an offence.

93 The results of these incidents is that there is a disproportionately high number of blacks – especially West Indians – in our prisons.¹¹⁰ How many of the Rastas is not known. A recent article by Martin Kettle stated that 'the Home Office has calculated that, even three years ago, more than a third of all borstal trainees from inner London were West Indians'.¹¹¹ And, 'the West Indians who form the largest black group in Britain's prisons and who have provoked Home Office alarm'.¹¹² Kettle goes on to cite similar alarming figures about different penal institutions.

94 Recently, Rastas as well as representatives of the Church of England's Board for Social Responsibility, the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice visited the Home Office Prison Department to try to persuade the Home Office to recognise Rastafarianism as a religion in English and Welsh prisons.¹¹³ This would constitute a turn for the Home Office which issued a circular in 1981 which

'said that Rastafarianism was not a religion. As a result, it explained: "It follows that no facilities such as access by visiting 'ministers', holding of services, provision of devotional books from public funds, or acceptance of periodicals . . . will be afforded." Most controversially, the circular announced: "It has been confirmed with the resident priest of the [Ethiopian Orthodox] Church that long hair is not a requirement and governors may, therefore, require their hair to be cut."

'It is now recognised that this was a disastrous policy. Dreadlocks are now not supposed to be cut off (although there have been recent incidents) and a new overall prison policy on Rastafarians will be issued later this year'.¹¹⁴

95 Correspondence with the Home Secretary's Adviser on Race Relations, reference to recent debates in Parliament and to recent Circular Instructions has established the current position of the Home Office in respect to recognition. On 16 April 1981 Patrick Mayhew as Minister of State for the Home Office spoke of the 'difficulties' in recognising Rastafarianism as a religion stemming from the fact that there is no central organisation or authority or recognisable leader to whom the Home Office can turn for information about beliefs or dress or hairstyle to establish 'authenticity'. The Rasta's loosely structured, individualistic system of beliefs would seem to be at loggerheads with the Home Office practice of dealing with traditional hierarchical organisations. Nevertheless it would seem inevitable that it must come to terms with the open system which is Rastafarianism.

96 Despite advice and discussions that the Home Office has held with many groups, noted above, its position is basically unchanged. While in November 1981 it issued a directive which seems to have affected the treatment of Rastas in penal institutions in respect to diet and dreadlocks, non-recognition is still the position, or as the Home Secretary's Adviser on Race Relations wrote on 30 August 1983, 'The general position has not changed'. He adds that, 'I cannot of course predict what may happen in the future'. The correspondence notes that:

'Provision for visiting ministers and services in prison would be dependent upon recognition of Rastafari as a religious denomination for the purposes of the Prison Act. There is, however, nothing to prevent individual Rastas acquiring devotional books and periodicals on their own account.'

Which means, of course, that public funds would not be used.

97 In January 1983 the Prison Department issued Circular Instruction 2/1983 which provides guidance on the treatment of inmates belonging to religious and other minorities. It usefully sets out a schedule of permitted facilities relating to services, food, dress and work. It notes that while some Rastas might ask to be recorded as members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church if, 'an inmate believes in the divinity of Haile Selassie I, he will *not* be accepted by the Ethiopian Orthodox priest'. It is useful to note that an Annex explains the belief structure and consequential needs of Vegans. This is not done for Rastafarians but in the Schedule Vegans and Rastas are shown to need a vegetarian diet. It also states that Rastas, 'should be given opportunity to retain long hair ("dreadlocks")'. It is clear that the training of prison staff in the recognition of the needs of religious minorities and in race relations is incomplete unless more information about Rastas is made available and the particular needs of Rastas are acknowledged. The tragic consequences of ignorance, leading to diagnosis as schizophrenic must be avoided in future.

Conclusions

98 Rastas can speak only of their own personal experiences with statutory organisations and that of friends. It has not been possible for them to build up a systematic record of discriminatory practice, or lack of discrimination, across a range of local authority services. To be able to present a clear case Rasta groups might choose to keep records as have the Bengalis in East London. Statutory bodies should also keep ethnic records in a way which would allow analysis of discriminatory practices; these will not necessarily enable the effect on Rastas to be distinguished from that of other Afro-Caribbeans because of definition problems.

99 In a similar way discussions with officers in a variety of organisations show that they too lack a clear picture of their authorities' policies toward Rastafarians. Despite the fact that there are no all inclusive policies in respect of Rastas what has been shown is that there is no evidence that authorities are systematically monitoring their own practice. Most local authority officers' response to questions about practice and policy in main programmes was to avoid that issue and to refer instead to grants that have been made available to Rastafarian groups. This is no doubt in part because of the difficulty, at the level of the individual, of differentiating the response of local authorities to Rastas

from that to other Afro-Caribbeans. Most of the difficulties experienced by Rastas in dealing with statutory organisations are similar to those experienced by Afro-Caribbeans generally and other ethnic minority groups. It has only been at the level of dealing with Rasta groups that most local authorities have become aware of a distinctive Rastafarian dimension.

100 In exploring the needs of Rastas that local authorities can or should meet the following pattern emerged. It would appear that over a number of years Rastas collectively have made little demands on local authorities. The stage which is now emerging is that a few groups are tentatively asking for grants for self-help projects. In both north and south London the immediate response was to let short life/poor quality buildings for the Rastas' use. After considerable delays, negotiations and good will on both sides this has led in some boroughs to stage three: better quality properties with capital grants from the local authority to do them up. It would seem that this stage is what a number of Rasta groups want. The fourth stage, a recognition of Rasta needs in mainstream programmes and services should form part of local authorities' general racial equality policies.

Footnotes

- 1 Shiva Naipaul, "The Rise of the Rastaman" and "How Many Miles from Babylon", *The Observer*, 27 June and 4 July 1982
- 2 Leonard E. Barrett, *The Rastafarians: The Dreadlocks of Jamaica*, Kingston, Jamaica, Sangster's Book Stores, 1977, p.30.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Catholic Commission for Racial Justice, (CCRJ) 'Rastafarians in Jamaica and Britain', *Notes and Reports*, No. 10, January 1982, p.1.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *Op. cit.*, p.2.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Barrett, p.65.
- 11 CCRJ, p.2.
- 12 M. G. Smith, Roy Augier, Rex Nettleford, *The Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica*, Kingston, Jamaica, U. College of the West Indies, Institute of Science and Economic Research, 1960, p.5
- 13 CCRJ, p.2.
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 A. J. Garvey, *Philosophy and Opinions*, 2nd ed (London: Frank Cass & Co., Ltd. 1967), p.34, quoted in Barrett p.77.
- 16 Garvey, pp.60-61, quoted in Barrett p.78.
- 17 Barrett, p.67.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 Smith, Augier, *et al.*, p.6.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 Barrett, p.87.
- 22 Barrett, p.92.
- 23 *Op. cit.*, p.92.
- 23 *Op. cit.*, p.93.
- 24 Quoted by Barrett, pp.96-97.
- 25 *Op. cit.*, 98.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Op. cit.*, p.99.
- 28 Barry Chevannes, 'The Literature of Rastafari', *Social and Economic Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 2 1977, Kingston, Jamaica, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, p.244.
- 29 Barrett, p.99.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 *Op. cit.*, p.100
- 32 Smith, Augier, *et al.*, p.38.
- 33 Barrett, p.100.
- 34 Smith, Augier, *et al.*, p.12
- 35 *Ibid.*
- 36 CCRJ, p.3.
- 37 *Op. cit.*, p.4.
- 38 Ernest Cashmore, 'After the Rastas', *New Community*, Vol. 1, No. 2 Autumn 1981, p.176.
- 39 Ernest Cashmore, *Rastafari: The Rastafarian Movement in England*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1979, p.53.
- 40 *Op. cit.*, p.52.
- 41 *Op. cit.*, p.53.
- 42 *Op. cit.*, p.54.
- 43 *Op. cit.*, p.55.
- 44 *Ibid.*
- 45 *Op. cit.*, p.56.
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 *Op. cit.*, p.58.
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 Cashmore, p.174 quoting from J. Brown, p.3.
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 CCRJ, p.8.
- 53 Jah Bones, 'The EWF is for All Rastas', *Caribbean Times*, London, Vol. 71, 16.7.82, p.13.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 *Ibid.*
- 58 *Ibid.*
- 59 Makeda Lee, 'Just a Word . . .', *Caribbean Times*, London, 9.11.82, p.14.
- 60 *Ibid.*
- 61 Smith, Augier *et al.*, p.17.
- 62 Barrett, p.106.
- 63 Ernest Cashmore, *Rastafari: The Rastafarian Movement in England*, London, George Allen & Unwin, 1979, p.6.
- 64 *Ibid.*
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 *Ibid.*
- 67 *Op. cit.*, p.67.
- 68 *Op. cit.*, p.68.
- 69 *Ibid.*
- 70 CCRJ, pp. 4-5.
- 71 Smith, Augier *et al.*, p.20.
- 72 CCRJ, p.5.
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 *Ibid.*
- 75 Plummer, p.65
- 76 *Ibid.*
- 77 *Ibid.*
- 78 CCRJ, p.6.
- 79 *Op. cit.*
- 80 Horace Campbell 'Rastafari: Culture of Resistance', *Race and Class*, the Journal of the Institute of Race Relations and the Transnational Institute, Vol. XXII, No. 1, Summer 1980, p.13.

- 81 CCRJ, p.9.
- 82 *Op. cit.*, p.5.
- 83 K. M. Williams, *The Rastafarians*, London, Ward Lock Educational, 1981, p.15.
- 84 Makeda Lee, 'What is a Rastawoman?', London, *Caribbean Times*, 25.6.82, p.15.
- 85 Plummer, pp.65-66
- 86 *Op. cit.*, p.25.
- 87 Cashmore (1979), p.79.
- 88 *Ibid.*
- 89 *Ibid.*
- 90 *Ibid.*
- 91 Williams, p.16.
- 92 *Op. cit.*, p.22.
- 93 Cashmore (1979) p.169.
- 94 Plummer, p.62.
- 95 The Rt. Hon. The Lord Scarman, OBE, *The Brixton Disorders 10-12 April 1981: Report of an Inquiry*, London: HMSO Cmnd 8427, p.44, para 3.106).
- 96 Robert Miles, 'Between Two Cultures? The Case of Rastafarianism', Bristol: SSRS Research Unit on Ethnic Relations, University of Bristol, *Working Papers on Ethnic Relations*, No. 10, pp.10-11.
- 97 *Ibid.*
- 98 *Op. cit.*, p.1.
- 99 *Op. cit.*, p.29.
- 100 *Ibid.*
- 101 *Op. cit.*, p.30.
- 102 The *Caribbean Times*, 28 May 1982, 'Rastafarians discriminated against in education' is a story about two young Rastafarians at Waltham Forest College who were not allowed to wear their 'crowns' during lectures. Subsequently they were asked to leave the college if they persisted in wearing their crowns.
- 103 Hansard – House of Lords – Lord Elton replying to Lord Avebury 'Rastafarianism: Religious Recognition in Prison' Col.905, 22 June 1982.
- 104 Letter from the Rastafarian Advisory Centre 1 September 1982 to the author.
- 105 Makeda Lee, 'Just a Word'.
- 106 Barrett, p.106.
- 107 Bev Woodruffe, '1977-1982: Multi-ethnic Education in ILEA' in *Multi-Ethnic Education Review*, Summer 1982, Vol. 1, No. 2 ILEA, p.5.
- 108 Editorial in *Multi-Ethnic Education Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2, p.3.
- 109 *Ibid.*
- 110 Martin Kettle, 'The Racial Numbers Game in our Prisons', (*New Society*, 30 September 1982), p.535.
- 111 *Ibid.*
- 112 *Ibid.*
- 113 Hansard. Written answers in the Lords, 22 June 1982, Col.905.
- 114 Kettle, p.536.

Appendix B

A Note on Research Methods

It is important to note that the researcher had only limited access to Rastafarians and therefore most of the information is from secondary sources. After reading some of the extensive literature on Rastas (see the bibliography) the researcher, a white middle class, middle aged woman spoke to as many Rastas as could be managed in two and a half weeks in the first instance. It proved difficult to approach members of a black, predominantly male orientated, chiefly youthful, predominantly working class political/religious movement, to expect to establish rapport with a 'representative sample' of Rastas. A limited network of contacts in the Rasta community was established by early discussions with the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice, the C of E Board for Social Responsibility, with CRE and with some officers of this Council and the ILEA. Some Rastas refused to meet the researcher, some made appointments which were not kept. In all only five Rasta men and four Rasta women were spoken to during this first period. A second round was carried out and that was more productive. All of these people were extraordinarily patient and courteous and after the discussion proceeded, it became warm and friendly. On average two and a half to three hours for each 'reasoning' session was used. The researcher is grateful and personally indebted to these Rastas for their help. The names of those with whom discussions were held are listed in Appendix C.

Appendix C

People and Organisations Contacted

- 1 Abyssinian Society (Newham): Lala Carnegie and Andy Greaves.
- 2 Black People Promotions Union (see Tree of Life).
- 3 Black Prisoners Welfare Scheme.
- 4 L.B.Brent: Jacques Compton.
- 5 *Caribbean Times*: Barbara Makeda Lee.
- 6 Catholic Commission for Racial Justice: Richard Zipfel.
- 7 Church of England Board for Social Responsibility: Kenneth Leech.
- 8 Church of England, Curate of St Paul's, Deptford: Harry Potter.
- 9 Commission for Racial Equality: Morris Forsythe, Horace Lashley, Clive Robinson, Gavton Shepherd, Liz Szondi.
- 10 Ethiopian World Federation Emperor Yohannes Local 33: Mahitima Selassie, Woletto Mohidan, Deborah Richards, Kim Bowen (see also Rastafarian Advisory Centre and Rastafarian Women's Organisation).
- 11 Greater London Council; Ethnic Minorities Unit: Herman Ouseley, Danny Silverstone, Ansel Wong.
- 12 Greater London Council: Police Support Unit: Paul Gilroy, Joe Sims.
- 13 LB Haringey: Nadine Finch, Dorothy Kuya, Valentine Jones, Marcus Grodentz.
- 14 Home Office: Nadine Peppard, Robin Duval.
- 15 Inner London Education Authority: Michael Hussey, Neville Braithwaite.
- 16 Institute of Race Relations: Danny Riley.
- 17 Kentish Town Health Centre: Helen Utidjian.
- 18 LB Lambeth: Jeremy Brown, David Baxter.
- 19 LB Newham: Diana Hill.
- 20 Monahan, Jennifer.
- 21 National Association of Probation Officers.
- 22 Rastafarian Advisory Centre: Wolleto Mohidan, Deborah Richards, Kim Bowen.
- 23 Rasta Unity (Waltham Forest): Angela Green (Sister Issacher).
- 24 Rastafarian Universal Zion: Jah Bones.
- 25 Rastafarian Women's Organisation: Deborah Richards, Wolleto Mohedan.
- 26 Runnymede Trust: Paul Gordon.
- 27 Simba Project: Cosmo Imhotep.
- 28 Lambeth CRC: Lester Springer.
- 29 Tower Hamlets Youth Unemployment Project: Caroline Adams, Josie Herriot.
- 30 Tree of Life, Black People Promotion Union: Habte Levii Marriam, Askala Marriam.
- 31 Youth Outreach Service – Vincent Cazley.

Appendix D

Questions Discussed with Rastas and Service Providers

- 1 Are Rastas concentrated in particular boroughs or parts of boroughs in London?
- 2 Could you estimate the numbers of Rastas in London overall and/or in boroughs?
- 3 What difficulties are faced by the Rasta Community in respect of gaining access to statutory services; employment by statutory employers; within the statutory/commercial sectors?
- 4 Are there particular statutory services in respect to which Rastas feel themselves to be more at risk of discrimination than other black people? Would these be:

Social Services; housing; DHSS; police (in day to day contact on the streets; in court; in station houses, borstals, detention centres; prison); education; training; employers.

- 5 Is the movement growing, changing? Who are identifying themselves as Rastas and what are their motives?
- 6 Are there particular difficulties that providers of services experience in relation to meeting Rasta needs? Are these different from or special as compared to other black people?
- 7 Are there particular boroughs/agencies which can be seen as carrying out good practice which can be cited as examples to others?
- 8 Are there other matters you would like to comment on?

Bibliography

- Barrett, Leonard E., *The Rastafarians: The Dreadlocks of Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica, Sangster's Book Stores Ltd., in Association with Heinemann, 1977).
- Boateng, Paul, 'Rastafari: Black Redeemer' BBC Transcript of Programme transmitted 7 January 1980, Radio 4.
- Boateng, Paul, ' "Rastafari: Black Redeemer", Not Just Some Youth Fad, But an All-Pervading Way of Life' (London: *The Listener* 14 January 1982), pp.6-7.
- Bones, Jah, 'The EWF is For All Rastas', (London: *Caribbean Times* 23.7.82) p.19.
- Bones, Jah, 'The God Head in Rasta', (London: *Caribbean Times* 23.7.82) p.19.
- Bones, Jah, 'The Psychology of Racism' (London: *Caribbean Times*).
- Bones, Jah, 'Rastafari: An Attempt at a Definition', (London: *Caribbean Times* 9.7.82) p.13.
- Campbell, Horace, 'Rastafari: Culture of Resistance', (London: *Race and Class*, Vol. XXII, Number 1, Summer 1980) pp.1-22.
- Catholic Commission for Racial Justice, 'Rastafarians in Jamaica and Britain', *Notes and Reports*, No. 10, January 1982.
- Cashmore, Ernest, 'The Rastaman Cometh' (London: *New Society*, 23 August 1977), pp. 362-3.
- Cashmore, Ernest, *Rastaman: The Rastafarian Movement in England* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1979).
- Cashmore, Ernest, 'After the Rastas', (London: *New Community*, Vol IX, No., 2 Autumn 1981) pp.173-181.
- Chevannes, Barry, 'The Literature of Rastafari', (Kingston, Jamaica, *Social and Economic Studies*, Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of West Indies, Vol.26, No. 2, 1977) pp.239-262.
- Garrison, Len, *'Black Youth, Rastafarianism and The Identity Crisis in Britain*, (London: An ACER Publication, 1979).
- Gordon, Paul, *White Law* (London: Pluto Press, 1983).
- Hansard – House of Lords, 'Rastafarian: Religious Recognition in Prison' Vol. 431, Col.905, 21 June 1982.
- Hansard – House of Lords, 'Prisoners: Mental Treatment', Vol. 427, Cols.643-645, 18 February 1982.
- Hansard – House of Commons, Written Answers, 'Rastafarians', Vol. 16, Col.220, 22 January 1982.
- Hansard – House of Commons, Written Answers, 'Rastafarian Prisoners', Vol 17, Col.94, 2 February 1982.
- Hansard – House of Commons, 'Rastafarians', Cols.471-478, 16 April 1981.
- Kitchener, Julie, *The Hazards of Being Black in UK Prisons* (London: *New African*, November 1982) pp.55-56.
- Kitzinger, Sheila, 'Protest and Mysticism: The Rastafari Cult of Jamaica' in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* Vol. 8 No. 2 (Fall) pp.240-62, 1969.
- Lee, Makeda, 'Just a Word . . . Peace', (London: *Caribbean Times*, 4.6.82).
- Lee, Makeda, 'Just a Word . . . Peace', (London: *Caribbean Times*, 9.11.82)
- Lee, Makeda, 'Repatriation – An Alternative Perspective', London: *Caribbean Times*, 11.6.82).
- Lee, Makeda, 'What is a Rastawoman?', (London: *Caribbean Times*, 25.6.82), p.15.
- Lee, Barbara Makeda, *Rastafari: The New Creation* (London: Jamaica Media Productions Ltd, 1982) 3rd Edition.
- Leicester Consultation, 'The Church of England and Racism', (London: The Church of England Board for Social Responsibility, 1981).
- Mansfield, C. P., 'Babylon and the Bobby on the Beat' (London: *Police Review*, 27.5.83, pp.990-91).
- Miles, Robert, 'Between Two Cultures? The Case of Rastafarianism' (Bristol: SSRC Research Unit on Ethnic Relations, University of Bristol, *Working Papers on Ethnic Relations*, No. 10, 1978).
- Nettleford, Rex, 'Introduction' *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979).
- Owens, Joseph, *Dread: The Rastafarians of Jamaica* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1979).
- Owens, Joseph, 'Jamaica's Rasta Faith Blasts Capitalism, Babylon', (*National Catholic Reporter*, Vol 16, 25.4.80), p.3.
- Plummer, John, *Movement of Jah People* (Birmingham: Press Gang, 1978).
- Potter, Harry, 'The Rastafarians', unpublished Ms. *Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons* (London: HMSO, 29 March 1983), pp.21-23.
- Report on The Work of the Prison Department, 1981*, Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department (London: HMSO, April 1982, pp.37-40).
- Ryle, John, 'Rastaman in the Promised Land' (London: *New Society*, 24/31 December 1981), pp.535-537.
- Smith, M. G., Augier, Roy, Nettleford, Rex, *Report on the Rastafari Movement in Kingston, Jamaica* (Kingston, Jamaica: University College of the West Indies, Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1960).
- Williams, K. M., *The Rastafarians* (London: Ward Lock Educational 1981).
- 'Jah's People' (London: Spectrum [Lewisham CCR] Spring 1982, p.3).

LONDON AGAINST RACISM

1984 sees the start of a major drive by the GLC to make people aware of the damaging and divisive effects of racism in London.

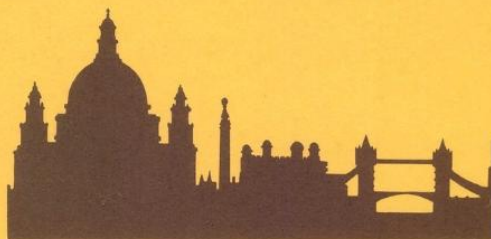
The facts of racial disadvantage ought to be well known, but too often people choose to ignore or condone them – especially the way larger organisations perpetuate racism in their structures and practices.

To be effective, the London Against Racism campaign needs your support.

How? Partly by taking part in the programme of anti-racist activities and events in 1984, but most importantly by a personal commitment to the campaign – by becoming involved.

- 1** To fight racism in London, this is what we are asking you to do: Recognise that racism runs through all aspects of life in London; not ignore it, condone it, or gloss over it.
- 2** Agree the fundamental right of all Londoners to enjoy a level of *real* equality, justice, freedom and security that currently does not exist.
- 3** Create conditions, at home, at work and in the community that make it impossible for racism to operate.
- 4** Join with all ordinary people in London to fight the disadvantages common to them all.
- 5** Examine, criticise, challenge and change the structures that perpetuate racism in organisations.
Don't sit back and leave it to others. *Your* contribution is vital.

If you want to know more about the GLC's policies and programmes for ethnic minorities, if you have any comments on what has been achieved so far or have ideas on what should be done in the future, then write to: Ethnic Minorities Unit, Greater London Council, County Hall, London, SE1 7PB.



LONDON AGAINST RACISM

keep
GLC

Working for London