

# ***RASTAFARI ~ THE MAJESTY AND THE MOVEMENT 2014***



## **Foreword by Ras Cos Tafari ~ Chairman/Co-ordinator**

*It is with great pleasure that we present this, our 3rd Newsletter to update our readers of the progress that has been made. We have found that in the process of these works, researching, writing and video documentary gathering that it has acted as a catalyst in inspiring many to awaken memories of their experiences and to be energised to share their story with a potential world audience. Many have found strength in their re-acknowledgement of what have in fact been some significant accomplishments and triumphs within the UK social landscape.*

*Many links have been established including the Offices of the Jamaican High Commission, The Ethiopian Embassy in London and various institutions and organisations that have offered to collaborate with the RMM or to host the UK Exhibition Display panels or Film nights for the benefit of communities in Britain.*

*We thank our counterparts in the Ethiopia RTMM committee and all contributors to this project for the endorsement, encouragement and practical assistance given. We acknowledge Qadamawi Haile Selassie I for bringing together this UK collective of ones with similar aspirations and commitment to preparing this Exhibition that will ultimately add to the collective knowledge of the worlds citizens.*

*In the words of His Imperial Majesty Qadamawi Haile Selassie 'We are commanded to work diligently, for aspirations bear fruit when followed up with deeds'*

## **INTRODUCTION**

**RASTAFARI~THE MAJESTY & THE MOVEMENT(RMM)** is an international idea conceived in Ethiopia and brought to the UK by photographer/curator Ras Danijah Tafari. A small working committee was established in 2012 to make the idea a reality. The aim was to capture and display the evolution of a unique social phenomenon in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Britain and trace its relationship to Emperor Haile Selassie's presence here. No such initiative has been attempted before.

The committee soon attracted new members with key skills and expertise suited to the needs of the Project, to research and *re-present* the journey and experiences of Rastafari individuals and organisations, who have shaped the social landscape of Britain. The fascination that Rastafarians commanded from their early appearance in Britain since the late 1950's lives on today. The RMM

(UK) is now positioned to depict that history through a vibrant selection of display panels, recorded Interviews, research materials, rare photographs, documentaries and films.

## TRAVEL

Various travel engagements promoting the project have been under-taken by RMM committee members in the period November 2013-April 2014.

Film producer Ras Rai and Project Administrator/Co-Coordinator Stella Headley in consecutive visits to Jamaica, made valuable links with the Rastafari community at high-profile conferences and meetings on the island. Information on the Project was shared with a range of organisations, media personnel and representatives of the movement. Positive contacts were established with the House of Dread and the Rastafari University of Higher Life Learning who showed interest in collaborating with RMM(UK) and intend to receive the project in Jamaica in the future. Writer Shango Baku spent 3 months in Ghana interacting with the local community and distributing info on the Project, which is scheduled for Ghana in 2015. Positive links were made with the head of Ghana Museums, Dr Zagba Oyorthey of the Diaspora Coalition, the Ghana Rastafari Council and the Black Star Liner Credit Union.

Project Researcher Dr Robbie Shilliam reported on the Rastafari influence in Asia during a December visit to Bangkok. Sis Addishiwot returned to the UK in December after a three month stay in Ethiopia promoting the Exhibition further, gauging awareness on the ground and co-ordinating/facilitating communications between RMM HQ in Ethiopia and RMM(UK) committee. Hers was a follow-up to Ras Lionwyze and Sister Stella's trip to Addis Ababa and Shashemane last June 2013.

The full committee membership reconvened in February 2014 after a brief hiatus in the intensive schedule that has brought the Project to this level of accomplishment.

Ras Cos Tafari makes a visit to Gambia in April 2014 to generate awareness of the Exhibition, Gambia also having been identified as a future destination for the touring of the Exhibition on the African continent.

## NEWSFLASH ~ Date: Thursday 30 Jan 2014

The New York Times has listed Addis Ababa as one of the 52 places that should be visited in 2014. The travel section of one of the biggest daily newspapers in the US labelled Addis Ababa as an ambitious art scene that is heading toward the international stage.

"Building on a strong historical legacy (Addis boasts one of East Africa's oldest art schools) are a host of events scheduled for 2014: a photography festival, two film festivals and a jazz and world music festival. Thanks to the city's diverse art institutions and galleries, including the artist-in-residence village Zoma Contemporary Art Center and the Asni Gallery (really more an art collective than a gallery), there is an art opening at least once a week. Even the local Sheraton puts on *Art of Ethiopia*, an annual show of new talent. **But it's the National Museum that, in May and June, will host this year's blockbuster exhibit, *Ras Tafari: The Majesty and the Movement*, devoted to Emperor Haile-Selassie I and Rastafarianism,**" The New York Times stated.

## **FUNDING**

RMM(UK) is now engaged in a robust fund-raising drive to fulfil its commitment to present the exhibition in Ethiopia during May-June 2014. An 8-person team is due to travel to Ethiopia in May to support the exhibition, make public presentations and facilitate access to the UK input. A special programme is also being drawn up for interaction with the Shashemane community. Air-fares are being fully paid by the UK team. Additional funds (£6,000 +) are being sought for transport of materials, technical back-up, subsistence and programmes in Ethiopia.

The Committee welcomes donations of funds or items such as books, clothing, artefacts, etc. that can be used in the fund-raising effort. Further info check Sister Stella ([sistahoutlets@aol.com](mailto:sistahoutlets@aol.com)) or Ras Shango ([onebaku@hotmail.com](mailto:onebaku@hotmail.com)) 07769813799 or 07903277175

## **SHASHEMANE**

RMM(UK) will be visiting Shashemane as a priority point of interaction on the Ethiopian landscape. An RMM(UK) & Ethiopia collaborative Shashemane itinerary of events and community socialisation including a joint Film showing with the Rastafari Youth Initiative Council and interaction during and after the films: "First Rasta!" and "Occupy Pinnacle", local tours, Cultural bazaar supporting sustainable local Rastafari Businesses, story-telling for children, satellite exhibitions and community round table discussions have been arranged. Opinion leaders and organisations in Shashemane have been contacted to facilitate these events that will profile the iconic community and establish viable links for the future.

## **STOP PRESS ~ Date: Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February**

Entitled *Rastafari and Pan-Africanism* the first public presentation of the RMM(UK) was made on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February at the weekly **PASCF**(Pan-African Social Community Forum) workshop in Brixton. RMM researchers and writers Dr Robbie Shilliam and Shango Baku addressed a full-house audience on the topic. Baku's 'professorial' delivery was spiced with humour whilst Dr Shilliam's slide show presentation engaged the gathering with poignant images from UK Rastafari history. The dual lecture was well received as new insights into the Rastafari evolution in Britain were shared with a highly responsive audience, eventually running out of Q+A time. Many thanks to the **PASCF** for hosting this inaugural event.

## **RMM DATELINE 2014**

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> February RMM presentation at the Pan-African Social Community Forum (PASCF)

March – April : Archive research, Video interviews.

April - May : Preparations for travel to Ethiopia including Addis Ababa & Shashemane

May 25<sup>th</sup> – June 25<sup>th</sup> : Addis Ababa National Museum of Ethiopia Exhibition.

July : RMM Exhibition evaluations and Exhibition Report

July 12<sup>th</sup> : Queen Mary University ~ Intergenerational Rastafari Conference.

August - December 2014 RMM Phase 2 Development

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT**

The Ras Tafari movement has arrived at a point of maturity, establishing a worldwide presence. In the 1930s no-one would have imagined that this disparaged, outlawed and persecuted 'cult' would have attracted an international following. Today there is no nation on earth without its

constituency of 'brethren and sistren', no country where this extraordinary culture has not taken root or left its mark and influence. And still we rise, defying the gravity of human expectation.

Of late Caribbean nations have tied their flag to the Rastafari mast in search of Reparations from Europe for the long-term effects of slavery and colonialism. Legalisation of the sacred herb has also become a burning issue. The Rastafari agenda has belatedly been taken up by CARICOM as a *cause celebre*, hence the pressing need for us to document and profile the movement from within, lest the verdict of history overlook, diminish or erase our contribution to African redemption and world peace.

The importance of the RMM(UK) initiative hangs on these precedents. The UK movement has played a significant role in the evolution of the Rastafari presence ever since dreadlocks first appeared on the streets of Brixton in the late '50s. Each succeeding decade signposted a dynamic growth in numbers and impact on British society. The triumphs of a politicised generation of Rastafarians in education, employment, health and social acceptability have reverberated internationally. By the '80s and '90s the homeward trek to Africa by individuals, families and groups had begun, fulfilling the vision of Repatriation. That exodus continues in this century.

The Exhibition celebrates this history through storyboard panels, iconic images, photos and recorded narratives. These are profiled alongside His Imperial Majesty Emperor Haile Selassie's four and a half-year exile in Britain. By linking the Majesty and the Movement in the UK a crucial chapter in the unfolding story of the Rastafari presence is revealed and in so doing, affords us a prophetic insight into the future.

#### **POST-EXHIBITION VISION**

Long-term plans for continuation of the RMM initiative are in place. The momentum of the Project has over-reached its initial aims. The UK team have agreed collectively that RMM should have a life-span beyond the Ethiopia Exhibition and should be viewed by communities across Britain. At present several partnerships have been enjoined with this in mind. The educational, cultural and social spin-offs of the project can serve a range of outcomes and benefit a variety of audiences and interest-groups. Rastafari Regal Livity (RRL) has been registered as a Community Interest Company representing RMM(UK). This legal entity will take the project to the next level and allow for the broadest development of its potential. Hopefully the exhibition in Ethiopia (and public responses to it) will provide answers as to how best to chart the future.

#### **Thank You's**

Many thanks to **Queen Mary University** for a generous donation towards the cost of printing display panels. Thanks to **Neil Kenlock** for photo contributions, **Stephen Bell** for the gift of an Ethiopian Scroll, the **Anglo Ethiopian Society (AES)**, **Padmore Institute and the Black Cultural Archives**. Thanks to all those who have endorsed this project including Bongo Carl aka Jahug, Jah Youth (Roots Ambassador) and Jah Shaka. Special thanks to all the interviewees since the project commenced including ~ Menelyk Shabbaz, Ras Seymour, Ras Clan, Rev Springer (EOC), Tony Massive, Esther Stanford-Xosei, Sis Zauditu (Sick Be Nourished Birmingham), Sis Beth-Shani (Mothers Of Creation), Sis Makeda (MEMAMS Project Birmingham), Sis Atronsa, Princess Askale Selassie, Maka B, Ras Brenton, Ras Iman, Young Warrior, Nyanjah, Ras Tread, Makka (Pinnacle, Birmingham), Black Symbol, Beeni Brown. Makka B, the AES, Stephen Bell and others.....

Closing Words by Sis Stella ~ RMM(UK) Administrator/Co-ordinator

*The Rastafari the Majesty and Movement project has been continuously blessed by miracles... from the inception of the UK Committee in the summer of 2012 up to this present time, the Committee have worked tirelessly in the spirit of self-sufficiency, inity and progress. To coin a phrase that has recently come out of our collaborations with Shashamene, it is the "Rastafari Great Love" that provides us with the strength of combined energies as we now move forward to Zion. Embracing the teachings of His Imperial Majesty Q'adamawi Haile Selassie I and balancing this energy with the strength of his first adviser and right hand - our Queen Empress Menen I. This has led us towards a re-focus on our duties to Ethiopia, lest we not forget them! Education and Sustainable Community Development is key in this process whilst embracing the guidance of the Majesty at all times and always remembering that "Africa awaits its creators", seeds are planted and require ongoing nurturing.*

*"There is neither shame nor disgrace in a day's work well and truly done, whatever the task and whatever the rank or status of the worker. The farmer and the labourer who have toiled diligently throughout the day have earned their bread and honest sleep. But the man, whatever his rank, who has spent his time in idleness, whose hand has been turned to little of profit or value during his working hours has earned only the scorn and disdain of his fellowmen whom he has cheated."*

*Jah Willing the RMM(UK) Committee will continue to farm, plant seeds and nurture.*

#### **THE RMM(UK) COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Ras Cos Tafari :	Chairman/Co-ordinator
Sis Stella Headley :	Administrator/Co-ordinator
Ras Shango Baku :	Writer
Dr Robbie Shilliam :	Researcher/Writer
Ras Lyonwyse :	Publicity
Jah Blue :	Organic Historian
Ras Rai :	Cameras/Video Editing
Sis Esther Stanford-Xosei :	Legal Advisor
Sis Addishiwot :	Amharic Translator/Photographer
Terry Humphrey :	Graphic Design
Ras Skorpi Gad :	Video Editing/Video Music
Ras Karnastone :	Video Music Production

#### **RMM(UK) CO-OPTED MEMBERS**

Sta-Kulcha :	Publicity/Facebook
Sis Beth Shani :	Birmingham Liason
Sis Zauditu :	Birmingham Liason
Ras Levi :	Advisor Ethiopian Relations