

RMM(UK) – THE INTERGENERATIONAL CONFERENCE REPORT



THE INTERGENERATIONAL CONFERENCE at Queen May University, London, on Saturday 12th July marked another chapter in the unfolding story of the RMM(UK) ~ Ras Tafari The Majesty and the Movement UK.

A quality audience included major partners of the RMM(UK): the PASC (Pan African Social Community Forum), AES (Anglo Ethiopian Society), BCA (Black Cultural Archives), NNC (National Nyahbinghi Council), EWF (Ethiopian World Federation), along with elders and youth representatives of the UK movement.

Ras Cos Tafari and Ras Shango Baku addressed the audience tracing the history of the initiative and the accomplishment of the 6-person RMMUK team in Ethiopia. This was followed by out-takes from Ras Ray-I's coverage of the colourful opening ceremony of the Exhibition at the Ethiopia National Museum in Addis Ababa on 25th May 2014.

During the refreshment break members of the audience seized the opportunity to view the eleven Exhibition Panel display depicting the rise of the Ras Tafari UK movement and His Majesty's 5-year sojourn in Bath. A slide –show of photographs created by Sister Addishiwot Asfawosen recording the RMM(UK) mission in Addis Ababa and Shashemane, gave a vibrant insight into the landmark event. The intended video link-up with Shashemane was cancelled due to technical problems. Instead, audience members were treated to 'The Shashamane Experience Introduction', a 35 minute film of video-clips showing the interaction between the Shashemane community and the RMM(UK) from 26th to 28th May.

Sister Stella Headley spoke of her on-going development work with Rastafari youths in Shashemane. The jewellery (bead) project had given economic strength and focus to a range of youths on the Land Grant and needed to be sustained for the long term. Sister Stella was joined at the Podium (onstage) by UK-based youths Ras Yohannes and Iyana Headley who shared their experiences and perspectives on Rastafari with the attentive audience. Ras Yohannes was of the opinion that new technology could be used effectively to reach young audiences who wanted to participate and be listened to, (rather than be preached to by an older generation). Sis Iyana spoke of the lack of awareness among her peer group at school regarding the culture and livity of Rastafari.

After a brief break the empanelled RMM(UK) took questions from the audience on agriculture, economic empowerment, education and the way forward for the project. Several ones were emotionally moved by the memories the panels invoked of their youthful days in the movement. Others saw the RMM(UK) work as an important educational tool for raising awareness among young people in schools.

Dr Shilliam's adept MC-ing kept the lively reasoning within the bounds of time. Despite the blazing heat of the day the receptive audience remained appreciative throughout. RMM(UK) stalls provided a rich display of Ethiopic / Rastafari books, clothing, artefacts and jewellery. The occasion afforded a multi-sensual appreciation of Rastafari works and set the tone for a model community engagement that will tour locally and internationally.