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# Rastafarianism and the Nation of Islam as institutions for group-identity formation among blacks in the United States : a case study comparing their approaches

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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

RASTAFARIANISM AND THE NATION OF ISLAM AS INSTITUTIONS FOR  
GROUP-IDENTITY FORMATION AMONG BLACKS IN THE UNITED STATES: A  
CASE STUDY COMPARING THEIR APPROACHES

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIOLOGY

by

Michael A. Barnett

2000

To: Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
College of Arts and Sciences

This dissertation, written by Michael A. Barnett, and entitled Rastafarianism and the Nation of Islam as Institutions for Group-Identity Formation Among Blacks in the United States: A Case Study Comparing Their Approaches, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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The dissertation of Michael A. Barnett is approved.

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Dean Arthur W. Herriott  
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Dean Richard L. Campbell  
Division of Graduate Studies

Florida International University, 2000

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## DEDICATION

To the memory of my father and my mother.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION  
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Michael A. Barnett

Florida International University, 2000

Miami, Florida

Professor William T. Osborne, Major Professor

This dissertation explores the Rastafari movement and the Nation of Islam as institutions that provide a group-identity for their adherents. The study seeks to determine the characteristics of the identity that is institutionalized by each movement, and the nature of the institutionalization process. The research was conducted primarily in South Florida where both movements exist. An extensive literature review in conjunction with in-depth field interviews were used as the primary research methodologies. What was of particular interest were the reasons that the members of the movements chose one movement over the other, also the similarities and dissimilarities between the movements in their role as institutions for group-identity formation. The research showed that both movements imbued their members with a sense of pride, high self-esteem and a strong sense of race consciousness. In addition, it showed that there was significant variation in identity orientation within the Rastafari Movement, which contrasted with the Nation of Islam where the identity variations within the movement were negligible. This was due largely to the difference in structure between the movements, the Nation of Islam being a centrally



organized movement with one leader while the Rastafari movement is a decentralized polycephalous one.

Both movements were found to be millenarian in nature, essentially because of the significant utility of the concept that their members would rise to prominence through God's grace. Additionally, both movements were identified as expressive social movements, since they were determined as being primarily concerned with changing the attitudes of their members rather than effecting structural social change.

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## INTRODUCTION

In this dissertation, the Rastafarian and Nation of Islam movements are investigated as prototypical organizations based on the respective ideologies of Pan-Africanism and Black nationalism. Thus the consideration of these institutions should include researching the respective ideologies on which they are based. One of the key goals of Pan-Africanism and Black nationalism is that of providing a group-identity among Blacks who are located in societies structured by a dominant white community, and in which they are a subordinate community (Walters 1993). Alphonso Pinkney (1976) defines Black nationalism as an expression of a desire for degrees of political, social, cultural and economic autonomy from the mainstream society. To attain this, it may be reasonable to conclude that the formulation of an identity that is to some extent autonomous from the mainstream society would be a necessary first step. Esedebe (1982) defines Pan-Africanism as an ideology that seeks to promote a sense of oneness among all peoples of African ancestry. Specifically, it is a political and cultural ideology which regards Africa and its descendants as one unit. It becomes apparent that pragmatic group- identity formulation is a necessary and important part of the process of embracing the Pan-Africanist ideology in a white majority society.

How is this autonomous group-identity formulation achieved within the framework of the aforementioned ideologies? The answer is institutionalization. Once an identity has been specified and defined, it must be institutionalized in some way if it is to resist and persevere against the pressure of majority influence. In any society, ways of seeing the world and of living one's life have been inherited from past generations. In other words, one's culture, one's very way of being has been institutionalized, (Berger and Luckmann 1966). A good case example of the institutionalization of identity from a Pan-Africanist as well as a Black nationalist perspective is that of Marcus Garvey (Clarke 1974). In his quest to carve



out a positive and progressive self-identity for Black people, he set up various organizations and enterprises: the U.N.I.A (Universal Negro Improvement Association) in 1914, The Negro World Newspaper in 1918, and the African Orthodox Church in conjunction with George Alexander McGuire of Antigua in 1921. The central idea in Garvey's philosophy, according to Clarke (1974), was the idea of Black nationhood; that is the building of a strong independent Black nation that would take its rightful place in the comity of nations. Nationhood entailed, first of all, changing the self-image of the Black man and formulating a new social-identity, (Clarke 1974). The activities of the aforementioned institutions established by Garvey were designed ultimately to achieve this purpose.

Marcus Garvey, who provided the ideological foundation for both Pan-Africanism and Black Nationalism, is widely considered as being the forerunner for the Pan-African movement of Rastafarianism and, in many circles, the Black nationalist organization, The Nation of Islam. Both movements or organizations have taken on the concept of positive group-identity formulation through institutionalization. Nevertheless, several questions remain, which are research questions for this dissertation:

- 1) What are the characteristics of the group-identity that is institutionalized within the Rastafarian movement?
- 2) What are the characteristics of the group-identity that is institutionalized within The Nation of Islam?
- 3) What are the similarities and dissimilarities between Rastafarianism and The Nation of Islam as vehicles for group-identity formulation?
- 4) Why do members choose one of the above institutions for identity formation rather than the other?
- 5) Can the two types of group-identity be correlated positively or not?

What is clear as regards the movements of Rastafarianism and the Nation of Islam is that they do encourage or promote a particular identity orientation of their members. What needs further clarification is, what exactly is the intended identity orientation of the particular movement or organization?

William Cross Jr. (1995) argues that Afrocentric movements seek to replace what he refers to as a Negro or non-Afrocentric identity with an Afrocentric one by entangling the person in membership requirements, i.e. symbolic dress codes, rites, rituals, obligations and reward systems that nurture and reinforce the emerging, new (Black or Afrocentric) identity. Cross (1995) insightfully points out that this can in fact lead to a great deal of conformity in the new recruit. In fact, it can be viewed as a paradoxical process in that, while rebelling against the larger society, the new convert may willingly convert to a number of demands of certain Black organizations. For Cross (1995) a key component in the self-identity formation of members of Afrocentric organizations is rebellion against the self-identity encouraged or promoted by the dominant (majority) group in society. Cross (1995) also remarks that in first becoming a member of a Black organization, the person or persons often experience a surge in altruism, as shown by a constant theme of selflessness, dedication and commitment to the Black organization. The person's main focus in life becomes this feeling of oneness and togetherness with the people of the organization.

The Nation of Islam, for instance, brings about an identity adjustment of its members by subjecting the person to membership requirements. Members are required to adhere to a strict code of morality, which is rigidly enforced. They are required to pray five times daily and to attend temple services twice weekly. Cleanliness is essential for both the individual's body and his surroundings, (Pinkney 1976). Courtship and marriage outside the group are not encouraged, and if a Muslim man should marry a non-Muslim woman, she is expected



to join the Nation of Islam. According to Pinkney (1976), although men are required to live according to a rigid code of behavior, that demanded from women is even stricter. Women are forbidden to wear provocative or revealing clothing. They are expected to cook, sew, clean the living quarters, and care for their husbands and children.

According to Van Deburg (1997) a common denominator of robust nationalistic expressions is the high value placed on self-definition and self-determination, whether the nationalism is expressed in demands for territorial cession, political empowerment, or increased cultural autonomy. Confirmed nationalists commonly believe that the ethnic, religious or linguistic group to which they are most intimately attached is undervalued and oppressed by outsiders. Adapting traditional nationalist tenets to their own situation as members of a racially defined minority population, most African American nationalists equate “racial” with “national” identities and goals. Bound together by ties of history and culture and kinship, they conceptualize themselves as being differentiated and (at least potentially) separated by competing social and ethnic groups.

According to Walters (1993:69), Pan-Africanism is a globalized expression of Black nationalism, in which a high value is placed on the self-determination and political empowerment of Black people globally, rather than within the confines of a particular country or geographical location. Murrell (1998) writes that Rastafarians are Africanists who are engaged in consciousness raising with regard to African heritage, Black religion, Black pride and being in the world. Because Rastafarians are African-centered, and articulate that all Black people are inter-connected via their African ancestry, they are Pan-Africanists. Their African-centered ideology is proof of Afrocentricity being embraced as an important phenomena in naming reality and reclaiming African heritage long before it came into popular use in the United States (Murrell 1998).

## **A Discussion on Identity Formation**

The study of identity formation among Blacks who are members of Black organizations requires a review of the literature concerning identity formation to provide a theoretical framework for the study and to establish some key ideas regarding identity formation. Identity formation theory lies squarely in the area of sociology known as social psychology, and it allows for various perspectives on identity theory, from the more psychological notion of self-identity to the more sociological notion of group or social identity. What follows is a discussion regarding these differing perspectives on identity.

### **Self Versus Group/ Collective Identity**

Recently attempts have been made in social psychology to bridge the gap between self-identity and group/social identity theories (Deaux 1992). In the past U.S. conceptualizations of identity have tended to be highly individualistic (Geertz 1979). U.S. work tended to occur primarily at the intra-individual level and secondarily at the inter-individual level (Deaux 1992). The self as represented by many social -psychologists tended to be highly abstract and devoid of context, with little association being made with groups or social structure. Indeed the dominant image was one of a curiously free-floating self (Deaux 1992).

European researchers, in part reacting to the former U.S. emphasis on individuals, have argued for a recognition of the collective aspects of self. With social identity theory as their guiding theoretical framework, they have considered identity in terms of social context and inter-group relations.

In the study of identity, there are various lines of approach. One line of research is the abstract self, which although having the potential to provide valuable insight on the process in which a identity is formulated, tends to ignore the context in which it might develop and is enacted. Another line of research stresses group membership but pays little



attention to the individual experiences that can shape and particularize the situation. Deaux (1992) argues that to some extent these two approaches derive from different traditions in U.S. and European research, but any sharp distinction between the two is artificial. Whether or not a sharp distinction is made between the two traditions, we have essentially two considerations of identity: one that places emphasis on the individualized self, while the other places emphasis on being a member of a collective or group. This outlook is consistent with the notion of the multiplicity of identity or senses of self that was proposed early in the century by George Herbert Mead. To quote Mead, “We divide ourselves up in all sorts of different selves with reference to our acquaintances” and “a multiple personality is in a sense normal” (Mead 1962). Deaux (1992) argues that a common model for identity is one in which we have a continuum in which personal identity anchors one end and social identity anchors the other.

Hogg and Abrams (1988) suggest a structural basis for distinguishing between personal and social identities. In their definition, social identities are self-descriptions deriving from membership in social categories, while personal identities denote specific attributes of the individual (and are essentially tied to and emerge from close and enduring relationships). Popular sociological conceptions of identity often derive from symbolic interaction models, these models typically place identity within a system of reciprocal role relationships. That is, role relationships based on positions in the social structure are enacted as self-conceptions. The theoretical path that tracks through the role theories of George Herbert Mead and Goffman, assumes multiple identities, an external influence and the possibility of frequent change. Within the tradition of social identity theory however, Tajfel (1981) was quite clear about a distinction between personal and social identity, specifically using the term “social” to distinguish his concept from notions of personal identity. Skinner

(1988) in analyzing the differences between social identity theory and George Herbert Mead's work (symbolic interaction theory), notes that for Mead a distinction between the social and the personal cannot be made. Thus social identity is personal identity and personal identity is social identity. Contemporary social constructionist perspectives such as that of Berger and Luckmann (1966), also point to the difficulties of maintaining sharp distinctions between the social and the personal. From this perspective it is acknowledged that personal meanings are constructed in and are dependent on the social context. Thus one's personal identity cannot be separated from the context in which it develops. Breakwell (1986) also argues against sharp demarcations between personal and social identity. In her opinion, personal identity may be considered the relatively permanent residue of each assimilation to and accommodation of a social identity.

Craig Calhoun (1991) argues that any discussion of identity formation leads inevitably to the "entirely abstract macro-micro divide." That is, on one hand we have the notion of self-identity, its acquisition being a process through which all normal human beings must pass. Common to this body of thought is the assumption that every person in his or her lifetime passes through a sequential process of various stages of development. On the other hand, we have a diverse body of ideas, regarding how various categories of people - communities, classes, ethnicities - come to share a sense of collective identity. Menell (1994) argues that one thing that most of the diverse sociological notions about collective identity have in common stems from the division of these theories and those dealing with self-identity. For him they tend to implicitly picture the construction of group-identities as taking place through the coming together of individuals, each of whom is pre-equipped with a personal self-identity.

### A Consideration of Group/collective Identification

Turner (1987) asserts that group identification can be defined as the collective awareness of the group as a distinct social entity. Lau (1989) argues, insofar as people are motivated to belong to a group to receive the reinforcements that come from that group membership, they will be motivated to conform to the norms of that group in order to maintain (or establish) group membership. From a social identification purpose, group membership serves several purposes, including providing a sense of order in the world, as well as providing a positive self-image. Tajfel (1981) assumes that people are motivated to have a positive self-image; hence they will identify with groups which provide them with this. Lau (1989) asserts that the more strongly other people treat a person as part of a group, the more strongly will that group become part of the person's identity. In addition the clarity of an individual's awareness that he/she is a member of a particular group will almost always be a function of how other people, both fellow group members and non-group members treat that person. Gurin and Rodriguez (1990) suggest that group-identification will be strongest among subordinate groups whose social mobility is blocked and among groups with high intra-group contact and low inter-group contact.



## Stylistic Notes

1) The word “Black” has been capitalized in this dissertation for many reasons. The first is an acknowledgment of the political connotation of the term. We should recognize the conscious implications of group identity that have been invested in the term by people of African descent. Secondly the capitalization distinguishes this term from the mere description of phenotype as is the case with the term “white.” We should note that in the American context, the term “white” is unmarked as an identity.

### 2) Rastafari Terminology used in the Study

(i) Dreadlocks - matted hair, grown naturally from the roots of the scalp, without combing the hair.

(ii) Brethren - Rastamen/ Rastaman

(iii) Idren - Rastaman

(iv) Sistren - Rastawomen/ Rastawoman

(v) Babylon - The complex of economic, political, religious and educational institutions that oppress Black people.

(vi) Rastafari - is used synonymously with the term Rastafarian or Rastafarians and is the preferred label for members of this movement, (since many attest vehemently that Rastafari do not fear anybody or anything).

## CHAPTER 1

### A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE EMERGENCE OF THE NATION OF ISLAM AND THE RASTAFARI MOVEMENT

#### Pan-Africanism: Its History and its Theoretical Orientation

John Henrik Clarke (1974) argues that Pan-Africanism began when the first European set foot on African soil and began or initiated the long tradition of African resistance to oppression. He goes on to argue that, while the term itself is not inherently political, the way the movement started and the forces which stimulated its growth have made it so. For Walters (1993) Pan-Africanism was born in a definite sequence of events which went from *practice* to *concept* to the *term* itself to the actual *movement*. The *practice* of Pan-Africanism starting when Africans were enslaved and taken to the Americas. For a long time after their capture they yearned to go back to their specific village or location in Africa. But over time the longing was to go back to Africa the continent rather than a specific region. The *conceptual* beginnings of Pan-Africanism took place towards the end of the nineteenth century, when there was a sufficient evolution of concepts that resulted in the Pan-African ideal (Walters 1993). At the turn of the century there were such advocates as Edward Wilmot Blyden, Alexander Crummel, Henry Highland Garrett, Bishop Turner and Henry Sylvester Williams who spoke of the integrity of African civilization and its need for redemption. Although the preparatory meeting for the 1900 Pan African Conference was held in London in September 1897, the *term* Pan-African was not used until the actual conference of 1900 which was also held in London and popularized thereafter by a journal, The Pan African, and the formation of the Pan-African Association. For Walters (1993) the last phase in the sequence of events was the founding of the Pan-African Movement which, he argues,

was initiated by the Paris Conference of 1919 organized by DuBois. He points out that the political paper The Pan African founded by Williams in 1901 only survived one issue, also Williams visited Trinidad, Jamaica and the U.S. to try to plant the seeds of Pan-Africanism there, but it was not institutionalized in any form. However, the sense of racial solidarity soon began to take organizational forms. In the U.S., there was the Niagara movement of 1905 followed by the creation of the NAACP in 1910. There was also the ANC founded in South Africa in 1912.

In all of the above cases the social composition of the new organizations was the same. They were made up of relatively well educated ; relatively affluent Africans or members of the African diaspora. All of their programs were dedicated to achieving equal rights and increased educational opportunities and to the assertion of the validity of African cultural heritage (Wallerstein 1967). Wallerstein (1967) equates the early Pan-African movement with another revolutionary movement of that era, the Russian Revolution. For him, the Russian Revolution symbolized two key concepts:1) formulating a theoretical framework of analyzing the world and 2) formulating a method of changing it through organized, militant, mass action. He argues that most of the intellectual leaders of African and Pan-African movements of this time only entertained the first concept and were therefore in a sense only “armchair revolutionaries.” For him, the only Pan-African leader of that era who utilized both concepts was Marcus Garvey, a leader who paradoxically rejected the theories of communism outright. Garvey understood the possibilities of anticolonial solidarity and believed that Blacks should take control of their own destiny(Wallerstein 1967). Garvey’s ideas were echoed throughout Africa, in French-speaking as well as English-speaking areas. His writings which promoted the value of self-help and defiance for Black people were read worldwide.



Garveyism had one basic overarching theme: the desirability of Black control over their own institutions, and the need to reinforce the solidarity of the Black community against the white world (Wallerstein 1967). This approach Wallerstein (1967) argues was too vulgar and unsophisticated for the intellectuals, most of whom never ceased to look with disdain, fear, and even repugnance on assertive, black-oriented, action-oriented mass movements. Whether in the Western hemisphere or Africa, these intellectuals concentrated on the weapons of the mind and the word as opposed to that of action.

Garvey was a Black leader who embraced the concept that all people of African Ancestry were connected, both the African diaspora and those Africans who were still resident on the African continent; that they should work together for their mutual benefit and that the continent should be redeemed. The argument over who is the true father of Pan-Africanism, Garvey or W.E.B. Dubois still rages in academic circles (Geiss 1974), but one thing is clear, and that is many modern day Pan-Africanists such as Kwame Nkrumah, Kwame Ture (Stokely Carmichael) and Malcolm X were heavily influenced by Garvey (Sewell 1990). He dared to build an exclusively Black organization with World wide connections, the Universal Negro Improvement Association, and to envision a globally united confraternity of Black people (Tafari 1995; Van-Deburg 1997). Garvey's stated aims and objectives of the U.N.I.A. were detailed in an eight point platform: the first purpose of the U.N.I.A. was to champion Negro nationhood by the redemption of Africa. A Second purpose of the U.N.I.A. was to make the Negro race - *conscious*. A third purpose of the organization was to breathe the ideals of womanhood and manhood into every Negro. A Fourth purpose was to advocate the self-determination of all Negroes; Fifth was to make the Negro "*world conscious*." The sixth objective of the organization was to print all the news that would be interesting and instructive to the Negro; seventh was to instill a sense of racial

self-help and eighth was to inspire racial self-love and self-respect (Pinkney 1976:45).

Garvey's impact on Africa and Africans was tremendous. His great goal was to see the entire continent free from alien rule and eventually to see a United States of Africa (Tafari 1995). Although it took root throughout all colonial territories in Africa, the U.N.I.A. spread most rapidly through South Africa in particular, where there were more U.N.I.A. branches than any other country on the continent (Tafari 1995). In fact the continent's oldest modern liberation movement, the African National Congress (A.N.C.), formed in 1912 just two years before the formation of the U.N.I.A. , developed close fraternal relations with the aforementioned organization, (Tafari 1995). As a result of the strength of the U.N.I.A. in South Africa there were South African delegates present for the first U.N.I.A. international conference in 1920, which was held in Madison Square Garden, New York along with delegates from, Latin America, the Caribbean and of course North America (Tafari 1995).

Rastafarianism is tied to Pan-Africanism via Garveyism. Rastafari can be regarded as a continuation of the concept of Ethiopianism as espoused by Garvey (Barrett 1997). An important stage in Garvey's development of Ethiopianism came at the historic U.N.I.A convention of 1920, where the anthem "Ethiopia, Thou Land Of Our Fathers" was accepted.

*"Ethiopia, thou land of our fathers,  
Thou land where the Gods love to be,  
As storm clouds at night suddenly gather,  
Our armies come rushing to thee.  
We must in the fight be victorious,  
When swords are thrust outward to gleam;  
For us will the victory be glorious,  
When led by the Red, Black and Green.*



## Chorus

*Advance, advance to victory  
Let Africa be free;  
Advance to meet the foe  
With the might of the Red, Black and Green."*

In sharp contrast to the popular songs of the time, this Ethiopian anthem was a call for the military preparations in anticipation of a struggle for Black liberation. Although other Pan-Africanists such as Wilmot Blyden<sup>1</sup> incorporated the ideology of Ethiopianism, it was in Garvey that the spirit of Ethiopianism came into full blossom (Barrett 1997). Through his writings and speeches, the glory of Ethiopia (Africa) became the glory of things to come. When reflecting on the nature of twentieth-century man, Garvey made references many times to Psalm 68:31 in the Bible which reads,

*"Princes shall come out of Egypt and Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God."*

His interpretation of this verse was that glory was soon to come to the Black Man and Black woman. The importance of this verse of Psalm 68 cannot be overestimated, it was the theme of the Garvey movement and remains the most quoted text in the Rastafarian movement. Rastafarians consider themselves and all Black people as Ethiopians, which in effect means that they consider all Black people as Africans. This is because in Rastafarian philosophy it is argued that in ancient times Ethiopia was used to designate the whole continent of Africa (Barrett 1997), thus Africa and Ethiopia are synonymous with each other. Rastafarians by in large are considered as the present forerunners of Pan-Africanism movement in the Caribbean region (Campbell 1987) and identify themselves as Africans living outside their homeland (Africa). Their lifestyle strives for a symbiotic relationship with "mother nature" which many members assert is in the African tradition (Barrett 1997).

## The History of Rastafari

It is generally thought that the first Rastafari appeared in Jamaica in 1930 just after Ras Tafari's coronation as H.I.M. Haile Selassie I, on November 2, 1930 (Owens 1976; Nicholas 1979). Marcus Garvey had previously prophesied the coming of a great Black King in Africa. He said "Look to Africa where a Black King shall be crowned, for the day of deliverance is near." When Ras Tafari was crowned as Emperor Haile Selassie I, King of Kings, Lord of Lords, Conquering Lion of the Tribe of Judah, Elect of God and Light of the World in 1930, many Garveyites in Jamaica saw this as a fulfillment of scripture (Owens 1976; Nicholas 1979). Revelations 5:2,5 and 19: 19-20 were used as the basis for the Emperor being considered as the returned Messiah. In addition being that the prime ideology of Rastafarianism is essentially Ethiopianism, it made sense that the symbolic head of the movement was the Emperor of Ethiopia, an Emperor whose lineage was traceable all the way back to King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba. (Haile Selassie I was 225<sup>th</sup> in a line of Ethiopian Kings which stretched back from the time of King Solomon to his arrival on the throne.) His lineage therefore was traceable back to King David and Jesus. In addition his hair was like Lamb's wool and his feet the color of bronze, thus thought many Jamaicans, surely this was the return of the Messiah.

Within three years of the accession of Haile Selassie I to the throne, there was in Jamaica clear signs that a movement inspired by the Kingship of Haile Selassie I, was beginning to gather momentum. This movement was the Rastafarian Movement (Owens 1976). In December 1933, one of the movement's founding members, Leonard P. Howell was arrested in Kingston, Jamaica, for using what was considered seditious and blasphemous language to boost the sale of pictures of Haile Selassie I. Howell's case came to court in March 1934, and he was sentenced to two years imprisonment. Not too long after his release



however some pamphlets written by him, proclaiming the greatness of H.I.M. Haile Selassie I, were found in circulation.

Apart from Powell other early proponents of Rastafarianism were J.N. Hibbert, Robert Hinds, Archibald Dunkley and Altamont Reed. The important thing that should be noted here, is that the belief that Ras Tafari (who became known to the world as Emperor Haile Selassie I upon his Coronation) was the returned Messiah, was developed independently by the aforementioned proponents of Rastafari (except for Robert Hinds who was effectively Howell's Lieutenant). Howell though is generally regarded as the first to preach the divinity of Ras Tafari (Smith et al 1960).

Mr. Joseph Nathaniel Hibbert was born in Jamaica in 1894, but went with his adopted father to Costa Rico in 1911, returning to Jamaica in 1931. In 1924 Mr. Hibbert had joined the Ancient Mystic Order of Ethiopia, a Masonic society which became incorporated in Panama in 1928. Mr. Hibbert became a Master Mason of this Order, and upon his return to Jamaica, began to preach that Haile Selassie I was the returned Messiah and the King of Kings (Smith et al 1960).

Mr. Dunkley another early proponent of Rastafari was formerly a Jamaican seaman on the Atlantic Fruit Company's boats, until he quit the sea on the 8<sup>th</sup> December, 1930, when he landed at Port Antonio off the S.S. St Mary. Upon his arrival at Kingston, Dunkley studied the Bible for two and a half years on his own to determine whether Haile Selassie I was the returned Messiah whom Garvey had prophesied. Ezekeil 30, Revelation 17 and 19, and Isaiah 43 finally convinced him. In 1933 Dunkley opened his mission, preaching Ras Tafari as the King of Kings, the Root of David and the Messiah, (Smith et al 1960).

Mr. Altamont Reed also preached the divinity of Ras Tafari in the early thirties, but did not remain long in the movement. He relinquished his position in 1940 to become Mr.

Norman Manley's body guard, turning over his following to a Mr. Johnson. Robert Hinds, as mentioned earlier, was essentially considered to be a deputy of Howell, although he preached to groups by himself on occasion (Smith et al 1960).

The development of Rastafarianism in Jamaica then was essentially the growth of independent Rastafari communities each influenced by one of the early proponents of Rastafari. Dunkley's group was known as the King of Kings Missionary Movement, but had no headquarters, officers or constitution. Dunkley confined his preaching to Kingston (Smith et al 1960). In 1932 Hibbert, on hearing Howell preach at a street meeting in Kingston, asked for a brief spell on the platform, after which Howell decided to join forces with Hibbert (Smith et al 1960). Howell asked Hibbert if he could preach to his followers in Kingston, intending himself to preach at Morant Bay, St Thomas. Hibbert agreed, and while Howell was away in St Thomas, formed the body of Howell's followers into a group called the Ethiopian Coptic Faith, which as opposed to its previous existence now had a definite organization and rules. However on returning from St Thomas, Howell rejected this order, removing its banner and its membership and leaving Hibbert to carry on alone (Smith et al 1960). Despite this setback Hibbert continued to preach and soon built up an appreciable following. Dunkley whose ideas had much in common with Hibbert was able to speak on Hibbert's platform on one or two occasions. With his mystical orientation and Masonic discipline, Hibbert proceeded to develop the Ethiopian Coptic Church along orderly lines. For this purpose he had extracts of the Ethiopic Bible of St Sosimas including the Ethiopia Dascalía (Apostolic Constitution), printed at his own expense by the Star Printery, Kingston, for the instruction of his followers. In contrast Dunkley who lacked Hibbert's Masonic background, continued to base his teachings on the King James version of the Bible (Smith et al 1960).



Out of all the early proponents of Rastafari, Howell was undoubtedly the most successful. He moved between Kingston and Morant Bay until 1940 with Robert Hinds as his deputy in Kingston. He had the largest following and was the most effective propagandist (Smith et al 1960). In 1940 Leonard Howell purchased an old estate outside Spanish Town and was joined by many hundreds of faithful Rasta. This initial settlement, dubbed “Pinnacle” lasted little more than a year before the police raided the place in July 1941 and arrested many Rastas including Howell who went to Jail for a further two years. Upon his release from prison in 1943, Howell returned to Pinnacle, leading a much subdued existence hardly known to authorities. In 1954 Pinnacle was again raided by the police and was broken up permanently. Many Rastas who had been living at Pinnacle came to Kingston as a result, and took up residence there (Smith et al).

Another important development in Rastafarian history was the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy in 1935. In 1937 under the patronage of Haile Selassie I, the “*Ethiopian World Federation*” was founded in New York City to affect the unity and solidarity of Black peoples all over the World, and to defend the sovereignty of Ethiopia. In fact H.I.M. Haile Selassie empowered Dr. Maluka E. Bayen to establish the Ethiopian World Federation Inc, in New York City on August 25<sup>th</sup> 1937, with its purpose set out in the following preamble: “We the Black Peoples of the World, in order to effect Unity, Solidarity, Liberty, Freedom and self-determination, to secure Justice and maintain the Integrity of Ethiopia, which is our divine heritage, do hereby establish and ordain this constitution for the Ethiopian World Federation Inc.” (The Constitution and By-Laws of Ethiopian World Federation, 1937, Pg 4). By 1938 the movement reached Jamaica and several chapters were established. The first local to reach Jamaica was local 17, which Paul Earlington set up in Jamaica in the month of August, with himself as Vice-President and a Mr. Mantle as its President. Hibbert,

Dunkley and adherents of Rastafari other than Leonard Howell's supporters were foundation supporters of this local. However, this local soon became dormant when Mr. C.P. Jackson was dismissed on charges of contempt of the members, and his successor, Miss Green removed herself with the Charter of the local shortly after being appointed. With the demise of Local 17, Local 31 was established with a Mr. William Powell as its first president in 1942 (Smith et al).

In 1955 Mrs Maymie Richardson came to Jamaica on behalf of the headquarters of the Ethiopian World Federation Inc. to expound the doctrine and organize further locals. This sparked a rush of informal groups into the E.W.F. , and shortly afterwards locals 27, 11, 37, 32, 33, 19, 40, 41, 43 and 77 were established, most of them receiving their charter in 1955. Paradoxically also in 1955, the Executive of the E.W.F. in New York wrote to the Executive Committee of 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 had aided Ethiopia during her period of distress. The land in question was of course Shashemane, and was the personal property of the Emperor (Smith et al 1960).

(In 1953 a Professor George Simpson studied the Rastafari Movement in Kingston, and is widely considered the first researcher of the Movement. He noted that the various groups operated independently of each other, and at this point in time consisted mainly of Beardmen as opposed to Locksmen. (It was actually after Leonard Howell's base in Pinnacle was again raided in 1954, that there was a significant increase in the number of Dreadlocked men.))

In 1958 there was another landmark historical occurrence, the first ever Nyabinghi. With the growing popularity of the Rastafarians in the city of Kingston and elsewhere in the



island suggested to some of the leading brethren that it was now time to assess their strength, and if possible to unify the various cells into an organized whole (Barrett 1997). This decision led to the first ever “Grounation,” what today is referred to as a Nyabinghi. Such a large gathering of bearded and locksed brethren was unprecedented (Barrett 1997). This meeting consisted of drumming, dancing and smoking the herb around a bonfire of old car tires, which essentially created a festive atmosphere in the otherwise grim atmosphere of the Back-O-Wall slums. The Nyabinghi lasted three weeks and attracted in the region of three thousand people (Smith et al 1960). It is widely believed that it was under the auspices and leadership of Prince Emanuel that the 1958 Grounation was called in the first place. Prince Emanuel had been one of the most prominent leaders of Back-O-Wall, since 1953 and had been in almost every confrontation with the Government on behalf of African Repatriation.

In an interview with Barrett (1997), the prince reported that he appeared on earth in the Parish of St. Elizabeth in 1915, and like Melchizedek, is without father or mother. He further reported that he had come to Kingston in 1930 where he was fortunate enough to see Marcus Garvey.

According to the University Report (Smith et al 1960) the Grounation of 1958 marked the decisive point in the deterioration of relations between the Rastafari movement and the Jamaican Government and public. Indeed if the relations between Rastas and the government were bad before, they certainly got worse throughout the course of the convention. There were several clashes between the police and Rasta brethren and a lot of negative press from the local media. Of particular note was an incident in which a march made by several Rasta brethren on Victoria Park in Kingston, to plant a red, gold and green flag in a symbolic capture of the city, resulted in a pitched confrontation with police, whereupon after several beatings and arrests the park was cleared (Barrett 1997). Prince

Emmanuel himself was severely harassed; just a little time after the convention his camp was raided by the police who arrested him and burned his settlement to the ground (Barrett 1997).

Probably the most far reaching and influential event for the Rastafarian movement in the early years was the University report, carried out by the University of the West Indies. It was 1960 that the University, as a result of prior events, embarked on carrying out the study on the Rastafari Movement and as a result produced a landmark report. Although less than a month was spent gathering the report, the intensity, dedication and urgency with which the scholars tackled the problem resulted in one of the finest pieces of scholarly reporting ever carried out by the University (Barrett 1997). The study for the first time revealed to the general public the history and doctrine of the movement, as well as the socio-economic conditions. Ten recommendations were presented to the government:

First, that the government of Jamaica should send a mission to African countries to arrange for immigration of Jamaicans. Representatives of Rastafari brethren should be included in the mission. Second, preparations for the mission should be discussed immediately with representatives of the Rastafari brethren. Third, the general public should recognize that the great majority of Rastafari brethren are peaceful citizens willing to do an honest day's work. Fourth, the police should complete their security enquiries rapidly, and cease to persecute peaceful Rastafari brethren. Fifth, the building of low rent houses should be accelerated, and provision made for self-help cooperative building. Sixth, the government should acquire the principle areas where squatting is now taking place, and arrange for water, light, sewage disposal and collection of rubbish. Seventh, that civic centers should be built with facilities for technical classes, youth clubs, child clinics, and other related resources; in addition the churches and the University of the West Indies should collaborate.



Eighth, the Ethiopian Orthodox Coptic Church should be invited to establish a branch in the West Indies. Ninth, Ras Tafari brethren should be assisted to establish cooperative workshops, and lastly presses and radio facilities should be accorded to the leading members of the movement (Smith et al 1960).

Of course at this point in time (Jamaica during the 1960's) many people considered these recommendations to be the dreams of a set of Ivory tower intellectuals, out of touch with reality. The recommendations were accepted however by the government, which was then headed by Norman Manley. Of the ten recommendations the first one was considered to be most controversial, but the government considered it the most crucial and immediately adopted it (Barrett 1997). Although there was no large scale immigration to Africa, some Rastafarian leaders were sent to Africa, which arguably resulted in the movement's enhanced knowledge of African realities and put the movement in better stead for making preparations for repatriation. The work of the University professors gave high visibility to the Rastafarians in the public eye, and people in the community began to take the movement more seriously, some even seeing it as the vanguard of social transformation.