

## Saluting Ras Seymour McLean

What a blessing it is when families of blood, faith and association link hands and hearts across the miles to acknowledge, with thanks the contributions of shared loved ones. Such a loved one is Ras Seymour McLean whose life continues to make enduring and empowering impact. It may well be said that Ras Seymour's mission is the realization of the adage "knowledge is power".

On Wednesday October 1, 2014 the Nyahbinghi Order in Shashemene devoted its "Light up di Fiyah" time from 5.00 to 7.00 p.m. to highlight the works of Ras Seymour. Officers of the Ethiopian World Federation in Shashemene were present to join in the readings, testimonies and prayers led by EWF Chaplain, Ras Hailu. Others such as Sister Wolete Mehdin and a few ones overseas, called to say that they were right there in Irit with InI gathered in Shashemene. Three European members of the Ethiopia Africa Black International Congress were also in attendance. They knew Ras Seymour by reputation only and were moved to be present.

From the Nyahbinghi archives and the Athlyi Rogers Pan-African Study Center, a number of items were selected for display, to depict the various strands of Ras Seymour's Repatriation Mission. This display will remain in place for the month of October 2014. A sample of the exhibits bearing the stamps of Rastafari International Consultants and the Ethiopian World Federation included:

- ✓ material from the campaign to repatriate the Magdala treasures especially now during this time of the Jamaican British Diamond & Golden Jubilee OAU/AU
- ✓ replies to Ras Seymour's legendary letters from institutions such as
  - the European Parliament
  - the European Commission
  - the Council of the European Union
  - European Union Delegation to the African Union
  - 10 Downing Street (Office of the PM, UK)
  - the Metropolitan Police
  - Department for Education and Employment
  - the Archbishop of Canterbury, Lambeth Palace
  - Buckingham Palace and
  - the British Library
- ✓ historical articles on the Battle of Adwa

- ✓ official and personal letters and other documents once secret and confidential that are now public (Italian occupation of Ethiopia, Shashemene Land Grant, Mission to Africa 1961)
- ✓ the Ethiopian Constitutions of 1931 and 1955
- ✓ photos of Ras Seymour with Matriarch Mama Baby I and other visitors
- ✓ Ethiopian Orthodox prayers and Ethiopic Literature of the Virgin Mary.

Some of those present were surprised at the recent news that Ras Seymour had been baptized and had received the name Gabre Mefesqidus. Ras Seymour had been sharing prayers and other material related to the Orthodox faith for years. His letter written in 2013 to the Metropolitan Police recommended that the Prayer at Golgotha be included in the training of police staff and officers. With the passing of Nelson Mandela last year, everyone Ras Seymour knew received the relevant prayers as soon as it became evident that Madiba's journey with the ancestors would begin. Many of I n I thought he had been a faithful member of the Church all along. Perhaps he was, but now it's official.

Ras Hailu described Ras Seymour as relentless in the pursuit of his mission. Among the testimonies were those who pointed directly at Ras Seymour's influence in encouraging them to come home. Sister Paulette Asher says that she came home because Ras Seymour had told her there was blade of grass in Ethiopia waiting for her to water it. She keeps a lawn today. Ras Dawit and Ras Kabinda reinforced the persistence and consistence of Ras Seymour McLean in fulfilling his mission and paid testimony to his being a stalwart brother and mentor and tireless worker of the Ethiopian World Federation in the United Kingdom.

Sister Ijahnya pointed out that even when information was received by hearsay or reasoning, it was Ras Seymour who could be counted on to provide the reference documents. He was one who never ever got locked into the box. She I-called his insistence in Jamaica in 2003, that the Rastafari Global Reasoning declare the hola herb legal. His is a deeper overstanding of the concepts of nationhood and sovereignty coupled with a boldness that makes him outstanding and places him ahead of his time. Ras Seymour has provided the Rastafari Nation with enough material for I n I to have our own curriculum in Ethiopian Studies. Those who still do not know the words of the Universal Ethiopian Anthem can certainly not blame Ras Seymour McLean.

The prayerful session was meant to have been preceded by slides of Ras Seymore's photos borrowed from his facebook page (with thanks to the unknown photographers), and followed by the viewing of ['The Book Liberator'](#). However, that was not to be as there was an electricity outage. Though it was not intended, we lit candles instead and reasoned more intimately agreeing to show the film at a later date. A few ones stayed behind and viewed it on the computer screen.

Sadly, we must end with a message of condolence to the family of Ras Seymour McLean, who recently lost another loved one, his sister-in-law, Heather Hanshaw. Word coming through Sister Wolete Gabreal (Sister P) to the Nyahbinghi House is that the family has requested that a tree be planted in Shashemene in her memory and that the remainder of the contribution be gifted toward the education of a child or children in Shashemene. We trust that we can use the upcoming opportunity of Arbour Day to plant that tree and the suggestion is that it be planted at the HQ of the EWF in Shashemene.

Heather's sister, Vivienne Mikely, has also signalled her intention to make a monthly donation in support of a child in Shashemene. Obviously, Ras Seymour's legacy of giving is connected to his family of blood.

Three children closely connected to the Binghi House have been identified as recipients of these gestures of generosity. Two are the children of House resident, Ras Fitzzy/Bangis Stewart, Ishema aged 12 and Boysie aged 7. The third child is 11 year old Fikadu, son of Tigist the house cleaner. He was dear to the hearts of Mama Baby I and Congo Rock I and they supported his education. All three children attend the JRDC School in Shashemene. The House is already supporting these children and it is sometimes challenging. Thanksgiving of the highest order is therefore the appropriate sentiment at this time.

We send utmost strength and courage to the Ras Seymour. May his family be similarly blessed. We further thank his family for thinking of the future in Shashemene even as they seek solace in dealing with the immediate past and present.

We give thanks for this soldier who took seriously, the following admonition of His Imperial Majesty, Haile Selassie I at the graduation of military officers and staff:

'Greatness cannot be achieved without great accomplishments. All demand striving and endurance...Education intensifies natural gifts and ability, but mere education, unless founded on a historical and cultural framework, will bear no fruits. That is why you should at all times reinforce your learning with the cultural heritage of your fore-fathers – a cultural heritage which you should revive. (HIM, Guenet Graduation, 1966).

Whatever his shortcomings, Ras Seymour McLean will ever remain a shining light on the horizon of humanity.

Ijahnya Christian  
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