

*"Today, we look to the future calmly, confidently and courageously. We look to the vision of an Africa not merely free but united. In facing this new challenge we can take comfort and encouragement from the lessons of the past. We know that there are differences among us. Africans enjoy different cultures, distinctive values, special attributes. But we also know that unity can be and has been attained among men of the most disparate origins; that differences of race, of religion, of culture, of tradition, are no insuperable obstacle to the coming together of peoples..."*

*The road of African unity is already lined with landmarks. The last years are crowded with meetings, with conferences with declarations and pronouncements. Regional organizations have been established. Local groupings based on common interests, backgrounds and traditions have been created.*

-Words of H.I.M. Emperor Haile Selassie in Addis Ababa May 25, 1963

Greetings and Ras Tafari Blessing,

On March 6, 2007, the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of the country of Ghana, West Africa. Four Ras Tafari bredren traveled to Ghana as a delegation from the West, specifically Atlanta, to strengthen the repatriation efforts and to network with repatriates and indigenous Ras. We left Atlanta on March 1<sup>st</sup> with the intention of arriving in Ghana on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, days ahead of the scheduled celebrations that were to take place on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Little did we know that H.I.M. had other plans for us. On our way in transit from Atlanta, to Ghana, we had a stop over in Amsterdam, Holland. Due to flight scheduling we spent the next 4 days in Amsterdam against our will. While there we got to know a little more about Holland, and Amsterdam in particular, with specific focus on the role that the Dutch played in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Dutch were some of the most treacherous enslavers and were second to the Portuguese in creating a trading ground of enslaved Africans in Ghana (by the way, of the 52 slave dungeons on the Western coast of Africa, 48 are in Ghana).

Finally we were on our way to Ghana to take part in the celebration of this African state that, with the assistance and encouragement of H.I.M. was the first African nation to gain its independence after colonialism. Upon touching down in Ghana the night of the 6th, we called some of the links that we had there. One sister informed us that there was an outdoor concert going on and that we should come. Although we were tired from the 5 days of uncertainty and travel, we want to take part in the festivities. On the way traveling to the concert, we noticed that the streets, building, and the people were decorated with red, gold, and green Ghanaian flags, this brought delight to our hearts. When we arrived at the concert, we were invited to come on stage by one of the organizers, all we could see was beautiful African faces and Ghanaian flags. We stood at the back of the stage for about 15 minutes enjoying the sights and sounds and decided that it was time to leave, as there were ones awaiting our arrival in a nearby town called Aburi (an area in the Eastern Region of Ghana where many Ras live, and the home of Rita Marley). As we were about to leave, one of the MCs asked us to stay a little longer, so that he could introduce us to the crowd, so we did. Upon introducing us, Congo Isef, the elder who was traveling with us, greeted the crowd in the name of H.I.M. and expressed his joy at the occasion. Ras Ishach then got on the mic and greeting the crowd with a thunderous JAAAHHHHH!!! in which the crowd responded RASTAFARI!!! He went on to big up the Ghanaian people and told them that Ras Tafari was in support of them. We then exited the stage and made our way to van to travel to Aburi. InI just wanted to share that experience because it set the tone for the rest of the trod.

There were many highlights of the trod for InI. After a day of rest, we traveled to Winneba, an area in the Central region of Ghana and went to Rock Top Resort, this is a 22 room guesthouse/hotel owned by a Ras family from the west who built this beautiful place from scratch. It is so majestic, with huge murals of H.I.M., and Marcus Garvey on the outer walls, plenty of open space, and the place is built at the end of a river where it meets the ocean. We had some good reasoning with the sister, her Kingman had traveled to the west and was not there at the time. We let her know our mission and told her that we see this place as a site for repatriates to stay when they first come to Ghana, and could be used as a transitional site. She agreed and let us know that they are open to all options.

Another major highlight was when we traveled to the village of Tutu, where there is an orphanage that HABESHA had adopted 2 years ago, and continues to strengthen. While we were there, we met the sister who runs the orphanage. She told us that she wanted us to meet the chief of the village and for us to come forward in 2 days. We came forward in 2 days and went to the chief's palace and were received warmly. Two of InI had received local names on our last visit to Ghana in August, and the chief wanted to give local names to the two bredren who didn't have local names, Ras Ishach and Congo Isef. The chief, through his interpreter, let us know that he had great respect for us and especially the elder Congo Isef, and told him that he wanted to bestow on him a special name because they considered the father of the delegation. They planned to enstool him with the name of their most esteemed chief who reigned for 69 years and 9 months. We were told to come forward in 3 days for the ceremony and later that day told that there were certain items that we needed to bring. Once you are given a local name, you are considered a part of the village, so InI who were taken in captivity hundreds of years ago, were being welcomed home by the village. We were given a list of things to bring which included, local alcohol, money, European alcohol, and a ram. We told them that we would reason about it and get forward to them. After reasoning with some of the indigenous Ras bredren about the list, we were informed that it is custom for the blood of the ram to be spilled on the feet of the person being enstooled. This caused a problem for InI being Ras because the only sacrifice that we give are joy and thanksgiving unto H.I.M. Because of this we set up a special meeting with the chief's representatives and respectfully explained to them our tradition, and let them know that we would not be able to take part in any ceremony where blood was shed. They explained to us that they would not ask us to do anything against our tradition and that an alternate ceremony could be performed without the blood sacrifice. So that came to pass, and the ceremony with Ila.

After the ceremony, the chief invited us to his personal house for reasoning. In the reasoning, the chief explained to us that he would like to see the education level of the people in his village be raised to a higher level and asked us if we could help with that. We then told him of our mission and what we would like to see come out of this welcoming for the future. We explained to him our story as captives who are looking to return home to build up the continent to its former glory, and that one of the major barriers that is holding us in the west is access to land without having to pay for it, and that there are many skilled people in the west who would like come home but finances is one of the major barriers. We also explained to him more about the Ras Tafari tradition had some good reasoning with him about the tenets of our tradition. The chief replied that land is available for residence and development, and now that we are part of the village, we have a right to land.

Another major highlight of the trod was our opportunity to link up with Ras from different mansions and organizations during an Inity Nyahbinghi celebration that took place in a village called Somanya, located in the Eastern Region. There we had Ises and reasoning with ones and ones who lived in Ghana and other parts of W.

Africa including Benin and Guinea. During our reasoning, we discussed how we could work more closely together and organized our efforts in Inity. InI told ones of the RNCI-USA that had been newly formed and encouraged ones to do the same in Ghana. We also expressed our wish to secure land for repatriates without have to pay for it. In addition, Sister Imara, a repatriate from Atlanta, who has been instrumental in coordinating our visits to Ghana in the past informed us of the various Ras projects that are going on collectively, including the Ras Farm Cooperative, building project, and community service activities. We encouraged the Ras to become more organized, so that they, along with the support of RNCI and the future RasTafari Global Government, they could approach the government officially, especially with the Grand Debate and the Joseph Project coming up in a few months. The reasoning ended with us starting to work economically together, by a Ras couple who owns a culture shop in the major shopping section of Accra called Rasta Do It, Outernational, giving us a bag of items on consignment to sell in the US to start working together economically.

Another major highlight was the video training program that we implemented while in Ghana with youth from the orphanage that has been adopted by HABESHA. We conducted a one day intensive training on video camera with 4 youth from the orphanage, with the assistance with two older youth (in their 20's) from Accra who have already been doing video works. After the training, the following day, the youth video the naming ceremony that InI went through. It so happens that one of the sub-chiefs in the village of Tutu, works as the national television station and had mentioned that he would like to see some video training go on in the village during our last visit. Upon leaving Ghana, we instructed the older youth to continue the training with the youth from the orphanage and that in the future we would like to build a video training school in the village. The youth agreed, and have been going to the orphanage every Saturday conducting workshops and hands on activities with the youth. We left two small video camera with them and some video tapes for them to continue the works, and worked out a 13 part video series detailing such things as the education, culture, food, and other things that will eventually be turned into a documentary created by the youth. The chief was also pleased at this development, and this further, solidified our relationship with the village.

As bredren who has traveled extensively throughout East Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania), there are many things that were sharply different and unique to Ghana that makes the country a very strong choice for Rastafari projects of all sorts to be established there. Ghana is a center of tremendous potential in terms of Rastafari resettlement for several reasons: the strength of Rastafari amongst the indigenous Africans, the positive attitude of the Ghanaian government to receiving Africans in the Diaspora, the potential of the land in terms of productivity, the use of English as a primary communal language, and wide distribution of Rastafari sons and dawns in several different regions and works.

The teachings of Haile Selassie I and the Rastafari culture in general are very strong amongst the indigenous Ghanaian community, which shows that Rastafari has really touched the people and that Ghanaians are receptive to InI livity. Whereas in places like Ethiopia, where there is a strong Rastafari presence, most of the bredren and sistren within the livity have come from outside Ethiopia, so Ethiopians accept InI of Rastafari as an outside element within Itiopia. There is not a large Rastafari community amongst the indigenous Itiopians, so the feeling exists sometimes that InI are something separate from the Itiopians themselves. InI am sure this sentiment is present in Ghana as well, but the fact that so many Ghanaian bredren and sistren have begun to trod Rastafari has communicated to the larger Ghanaian community that the Rastafari livity is not just a 'foreign' element amongst them. InI

feel that Ghanaians see Rastafari as an African tradition firstly, so they seemed very receptive towards InI.

The Ghanaian government has implemented several initiatives that shows that they are looking to Africans in the Diaspora to invest in Ghana's development. This is a great strength because this opens the door for InI to get residency permits, job permits, business licenses, and other official documents that confirms InI legitimate residency in Ghana. Plus, organizations like Fihankra exist and are being established to assist Africans of the Diaspora in resettling in Africa. This is not to mention things such as the Joseph Project that the government is doing to specifically promote African American investment in the country.

The land itself is extremely fertile, abundant, and the vegetation is conducive to supporting InI ital lifestyle. The country is very green and in every region food is abundant. The people in general seem to eat good, even if they don't have other essentials, which is also different from East Africa. In East Africa, the poverty is so debilitating that you see people hungry in the streets. However, in Ghana, the people seemed to be eating well and amongst the Rastafari community, there seemed to be a growing interest in establishing agricultural projects to utilize the natural resources. In general, InI found most of the Rastafari sons and dawtas to be very practical-oriented and living close to the land. Several ones are tapping into business markets as well, but InI see agriculture being the base even for those businesses.

Another strength of the Rastafari community in Ghana is that there is a general sense of productivity and inity in the livity of ones and ones. There are Rastafari sons and dawtas in every region of Ghana from the Volta region to Accra area to Kumasi to other outlying areas. Furthermore, the communication amongst bredren and sistren is strong to the level that Idren are aware of each other's works and whereabouts. That is a strength because as InI coming in from the West, the potential is unlimited in terms of various regions to settle in and various works to get involved it. InI witnessed bredren calling on each other for assistance in building water wells, establishing businesses and building homes and because of this collective reliance, the fraternity amongst bredren seemed to be strong no matter the differences in background. Whether one trod within Nyahbinghi, 12 Tribes, Bobo Ashanti, EWF or whatever, there was little attention given to such things and from the time one trod as a Rastafari son or dawta, fullest respect was given InI. Also, many bredren and sistren live the Aburi area (mountainous region outside of Accra), which seemed to be a location of centralization for Rastafari. As such, there is an abundance of land available to InI outside of the city life, which is conducive to InI livity as connected to the earth.

Give Thanks unto H.I.M. for his Guidance and Protection,

Binghi Shawn  
Ras Tre  
Ras Ishach  
Congo Isef