

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE RASTAFARI FORUM AT THE NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY (MAFIKENG CAMPUS)**

### **1. Background**

There is an increasing awareness among Afrikans within the continent and those in the Diaspora for the need to promote linkages and cooperation on issues of mutual interest for the development of people of African origin. It is on the basis of this increasing awareness that the Rastafarian Forum is hosted on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006 at the North West University, Robinson Room (Great Hall). The objectives are:

- (i) To reaffirm the cultural, historical bonds between Afrika and the Afrikan Diaspora based on shared experiences enslavement, colonialism and apartheid.
- (ii) To promote awareness of the contribution of Afrikans within the continent and in the Diaspora to world civilization, especially on issues of Human, Social Science and Technology. The contribution of Afrikans should not be confined to cultural aspects such as music, eating habits, dress, folklore, etc.
- (iii) To acknowledge and recognize the Rastafari Movement that has served as cultural forces of integration in both the Diaspora and Kiaspora.

South Afrika and the North West University (Mafikeng Campus) are in the forefront of implementing these objectives through teaching, research and community outreach programme. Our objectives are to work together closely with Brothers and Sisters in the Diaspora through exchange and joint programmes (Historical Lectures) so as to realize these objectives.

It is not by accident that South Africa (Especially the Northern Cape, Western Cape, Gauteng-Zwasiland, Free State-Lesotho, Limpopo-Maputo and North West Province-Botswana) is one of the countries with the largest number of Rastafarians in the world. The link between South Africa and the Rastafarians is also found in the Holy Piby, a text

written by an Anguillian man named Athlyi Rogers that became known as the black man`s bible.

The Nyahbinghi Creed that is recited at Rastafari spiritual gatherings appears originally in the Holy Piby. The holy Piby became a banned publication that was smuggled into South Africa and impacted strongly on the diamond workers in Kimberly-Galeshewe, which is today a Rastafarian stronghold.

Given the above-mentioned scenario, it is important for the participants at this Forum to break down the barriers of ignorance and foster continuous dialogue, network between the continent and the Diaspora. Sharing and promotion of the knowledge of history, especially among youth is imperative in order to overcome the legacy of Colonial-Apartheid education.

# AFRIKA FOR AFRIKANS FOR THOSE AT HOME AND ABROAD

**Tuesday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2006**  
**Robinson Room (Great Hall)**  
**North West University (Mafikeng Campus)**

## **RASTAFARI AGENDA**

16h00-16h30	Arrival & Registration of delegates	<b>Robinson Room (Great Hall)</b>
16h40-16h50	Welcome Address	<b>University Management</b>
16h55-17h10	Objectives of the Forum	<b>Ras Gideon Mantula Moderator</b>
17h15-17h35	Global Rastafari Challenges & Future Prospects	<b>Ras Nathaniel (Washington)</b>
17h35-18h00	Presentation by Preparatory Committee of Global Rastafari Unity Conference 2006	<b>Rastafari United Movement &amp; Rasta Youth Initiative (Gauteng)</b>
18h00-18h20	Anthropolatry: Case Study of Rastafarians	<b>Tekla Haymanot (Gauteng)</b>
18h20-19h10	Questions, Discussions,	
19H15-19H30	Summary & Way Forward	<b>Ras Gideon Sipho Mantula Moderator</b>
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**Report of Rastafari Forum,  
Robinson Room, North West University  
14 November 2006**

On the 14 November 2006, members of the Rastafari Community, North West University management, Student's Organization and the Youths from the Ghetto gathered at the Robinson Room (Great- Hall) Northwest University, Mafikeng Campus to deliberate on the theme "Establishment of Rastafarian Forum". It was historic because this was the first time such forum held in the Northwest and this particular forum was led by Rastafari People's.

The objective was not only to applaud the participation of Afrikan Diaspora in the Afrikan Agenda, but it was also in relation to the role and contribution of Rastafarian Community of Teachers and Scholars in transforming the Current Educational Curriculum.

The Rastafarian Forum was hosted by the North West Roots Radics Community Council. These brief reports of the proceedings and recommendations were deliberated by the participants and speakers who came from all walks of life, especially Ras Nathaniel from USA.

Sincere gratitude and thanks is due to the North West University Management Indigenous Knowledge Systems Programme, representatives from Campus Student Representative Council, Pan Afrikan Student movement of Azania, and Rastafarian elders and youth.

Even though the Forum was a progressive step towards Rastafarian Education dialogue, it was organized at a very short space of time, during examination period and some of the logistics were not properly arranged. For instance, publicity and the participants did not receive information about the forum in due time hence, most of them were providing their theoretical and verbal presentations.

The Rastafarian Forum started with a Libation from Ras Tekla Haymanot. The Moderator of the forum was Ras Gideon Siphon Mantula. A representative from the Rector's office delivered a welcome address. The university management indicated its unconditional support to all cultural, religious and social movements in the University, and they will recognize the Rastafarian Student Movement and give them a platform and a slot in the new Radio Campus.

## **Ras Nathaniel (USA, Washington)**

The keynote speaker at the forum was Ras Nathaniel. Brother Nathaniel deliberated more on the Rastafari movement and Repatriation.

The message of Ras Nathaniel was based on the African development and the way forward for Diaspora and Kiaspora, His emphasize was on re-building the African identity and to ensure that repatriation is a must.

Ras Nathaniel was quoted from the audiotape saying that "Afrikan Union (AU) is in its infancy". The formation of the Organization Afrikan Unity (OAU) by His Majesty, Emperor Haile Sellassie, with leaders of Afrikan continent who had gained their independence and leaders of the liberation movement was a historic initiative. The objective of the OAU was to eradicate Colonialism, Apartheid, and ensure Political Independence. The OAU mission was not completed in South Africa from 1963 until 1994, which marked the end of apartheid regime.

It is important to note that the formation of AU is very crucial because of the mission and objective of working towards the development of Afrika. The new objective of AU consolidated political gains through cultural, economic, technological and social development of the continent. The new vision and formation of the AU is very significant by inviting the participation of Afrikan Diaspora in the AU agenda and activities.

Ras Nathaniel talked about the philosophy and principle of Ubuntu, collective security as day-to-day message of Rastafarian People's globally.

Rastafarian People's are proud of their roots, history, culture and identity. He argued that Afrikans in the Diaspora are not strangers to Afrika, but their roots are traced back to Afrika. Ras Nathaniel emphasized on the vision of His Majesty, Haile Sellassie together with other Founding fathers such, Jomo Kenyatta, Patrice Lumumba, Modibo Keita, Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah, echoed the cry for "United States of Afrika".

Ras Nathaniel stated that AU will not be successful until the entire Afrikan people at home and abroad participate actively not passively in the activities, drafting of policies, implementation of projects and programmes of AU.

Ras Nathaniel reasoned that the contribution and participation of Rastafarian movement in the Diaspora against slavery and colonialism should not be overlooked.

The history of the Maroons and their struggle against the injustice of colonial education and oppressive rule should be taken into account; Ras Nathaniel indicated that the tradition of Rastafarian movement is resistance to colonialism and oppression of any kind.

### **Ras Natty Dread (Rasta Youth Initiative: RYI)**

Ras Natty dread also delivered a verbal presentation, it was expected that the elder would evaluate and assess the challenges and progressive steps of the Global Rastafari Conference that was hosted in Gauteng (Grasmere-02 November 2006). Be that as it may, Ras Natty Dread indicated verbally that the conference was a success; however, he did not provide any official report based on those remarks. Ras Natty Dread talked about their partnership with the Rastafarian United Movement (R.U.M) and their challenges during the preparation and hosting of the Global Conference.

Ras Natty Dread said that the RYI is committed to educating members of the community about the philosophy and culture of Rastafari; He also touched briefly but did not provide the participants with the details of the envisaged meeting of Rastafari Community with the President of South Afrika-Hon.Cde Thabo Mvuyelwa Mbeki

### **Ras Tekla Haymanot (Spokesperson of Rasta United Movement, R.U.M)**

Ras Tekla Haymanot delivered Rastafari case study on "Anthropolatry" which means the worship of God in Man. According to Tekla, this is one of his unpublished thesis that is been prepared and researched for forums of this particular nature, especially to address the Afrikan Intellectual young and elderly community.

The audience were fascinated by the findings of Ras Tekla, especially on current and burning issues such as the valorization and recognition of African Indigenous Knowledge Systems (AIKS), the role and contribution of Rastafari in the higher institutions of learning and the supremacy, features, characteristics and the attributes of His Majesty, Haile Sellassie as God and King of the Rastafari people.

Ras Tekla indicated that Rastafari is far beyond issues of spirituality or religion, but Rastafari is a movement that is indigenous to Afrika, and its role in nation building is significant. Rastafari is not a foreign doctrine, but is part of the holistic African Indigenous Knowledge Systems and has to be incorporated in the school curriculum and Community at large.

In a nutshell, Ras Tekla provided a brief summary of his thesis, and pleaded to work together with the Indigenous Knowledge Systems coordinators for publication and valorization of some of his intellectual work.

### **Recommendations and Resolutions**

- Establish Joint cultural, educational and social exchange programmes and projects between the Afrikan Diaspora and the North West University
- The Re-Establishment of the Rastafari Student Movement.
- Engage the South African Government
- Dissemination, publication of Rastafari historical, material, manuals and books
- Establish effective and conducive linkages with the Afrikan Diaspora
- Promote the Philosophy of Afrikan Renaissance/Re-braining
- Introduce Rastafari open lectures in the North West University (Mafikeng Campus)
- Ensure Rastafari Unity in South Afrika and the world at large.

In the final analysis, the visions and mission of Rastafari will be incomplete without emphasize on transformation of education, centralization and administration of Rasta communities at local, provincial, national, regional, continental and global level. Issues of Repatriation, Reparation and establishment of Rastafari secretariat are very broad, complex processes that do not require lip service, but real efforts, commitments and participation of heads of states and social movements.

Recalling the words of H.I.M., it is befitting and prophetic to re write these words in our minds and souls that:

**Each one of us must participate and contribute in the Re-development of Afrika...**

"Humanity by nature is gifted to think freely, but in order that this free thought should lead him to the goal of liberty and independence, his way of thinking must be shaped by the process of education"

"Loyalty inspires understanding and understanding cooperation; these are the clearest evidences of strength. But the solid basis for all lies in EDUCATION. It is education which allows people to live together, makes them avoid the pitfalls of immorality, and induces respect for the law".  
JAH RASTAFARI HAILE SELLSIE

ISSUED BY THE NORTH WEST ROOTS RADICS COMMUNITY COUNCIL:  
RESEARCH AND INTERNATIONAL LIASON DESK

RAS FOUNDATION MOTHEO KOITSIWE

RAS GIDEON SIPHO MANTULA

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