

# **Empress of Zion launches book at University of Botswana**

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Last Friday, the Rastafarian community in Botswana and from as far off as Mafikeng and New York converged on the University of Botswana Library seminar room for the launch of the book *Empress of Zion*. According to one of the organisers, Ras Munyah, the launch was a collaborative effort between the Graduate Student Association, the Rastafarian community and the Atlanta, Georgia (USA) based *Empress of Zion* movement.

Anyone that has ever been to any Rastafarian affair will attest that they always turn out to be events loaded with information about the past glory of the African race, where we are in the current order of things and where we should be; and Friday's affair was no different. Outside the seminar room a number of books, most of them privately owned, were on display. With titles like *The Black Jews of Ethiopia*, *The Last Exodus and Menelik of Ethiopia*, the stage was set for what was to later follow.

A prayer and the singing of the Ethiopian national anthem were followed by a poetry recital by well-known visual artist, Ras Diseko, and others. The poem "Hail! USA" by Marcus Garvey predicted the future union of Africa, the black man's free home.

This poem was written at a time when the black race at home and the Diaspora were going through the twin horrors of colonisation and Jim Crow; and this was the main topic for the panel discussion that was to follow. What are the practical means of making the dream of a United States of Africa a reality?

According to a presentation by Ras Ananda Ris I entitled "The Lion has Roared" this can be achieved in three ways: 1) recognition of Haile Selassie as the prophesised coming of the messiah; 2) repatriation of the Africans in the Diaspora and; 3) the reparations for the past

sins committed against Africans and the disruption of Africa's progress. "The onus is on us the Rastafarian movement or whatever movement which embraces this kind of idea that we should lobby our respective government," said Ras Ananda Ris I.

According to his presentation the repatriation of Africans from the Diaspora would bring untold benefits like capital cash flow, skilled and expert human resource and material wealth such as machinery, equipment and technology transfer. Dual citizenship for the Diaspora community would hasten the drive to see Africa's long lost children come home and help in the development of the continent.

A philosophy of self-reliance was also suggested in a powerful quote from Emperor Haile Selassie: "Africa as a nation is in spiritual and physical bondage because her leaders are turning to outside forces for solutions to African problems when everything Africa needs is within her."

While all the ideas espoused were nothing new as they had long been suggested by Pan African great such as WEB Du Bios, Cheikh Anta Diop and the like, long before the advent of Rastafarianism, it was encouraging to know that there are still a lot of Africans who are interested in seeing the continent pull together her human and material resources for the betterment of all Africans.

The recognised barriers are still the governments in Africa who go at it alone despite the ideals of the old OAU and the AU. To this day Ghana is the only African country that has in its constitution a clause of giving up her sovereignty were Africa to decide to be one country. Ethiopia is the only country to set up land, in Sheshamane, for repatriating blacks from the Diaspora.

"Just because some of us were born outside the continental borders of Africa, it makes us no less Africans. But if the indigenous people don't have land, where are we from the Diaspora going to find land?" asked Queen Mother M.O.S.E.S, an invited guest from Atlanta, Georgia.

While the launch and discussions were encouraging, it should be noted that there were no government officials present nor were there any signed petitions to be taken to government. The Empress of Zion book is available at the University of Botswana library. The night ended with music and healthy Rastafarian food.