



**Ethiopia.** The home of the first written music, preceding Europe by a thousand years. Home of one of the most ancient alphabets. Home of the ancient obelisks of Axum, the Lalibela churches, the Saf Omarn Caves, the Kulse terraces and Harar. The home of much, much more plus 70 million Ethiopians with more than 80 languages. A mix of spiritual and cultural wonders side by side with extreme poverty and want due to wars and aggression.

## **Greetings Ethiopians at home and abroad From the Marley Family and friends**

The defeat of the Italians at the battle of Adwa by Emperor Menelik and Empress Taitu, is indeed the beginning of it all. As Medhane Tedasse points out in his article on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2005, this triumph of an independent free African state over a bastion of colonization helped the Pan Africanists of the 1940's realize the need for a unified Africa, as the western colonizers will always seek to divide and rule. Marcus Garvey, the internationally recognized Jamaican prophet and Pan Africanist, in recognizing the union between State and Church in the person of His Imperial Majesty, called on Africans to recognize One God, One Aim, One Destiny. We may call Him, Allah, Elohim, Jahnoyh, One God for us all. If one examines this concept tho', the truth is obvious. A unified Africa made up of diverse language groups, a myriad of beautiful cultures, united for African peace and economic stability has immediately more strength, than separated, weakened, poverty stricken states.

Why did the Marley family hold the celebrations in Ethiopia? As Tadesse pointed out, "what motivated the event to be held in Addis Ababa is the historical, political, religious and emotional attachment the Ras Teferians have had with

Ethiopia and its late Emperor.” For many Ethiopians, Ethiopia has always been free and has never experienced slavery. This is not correct if we know our history. Oppression and aggression as well as colonization is well documented in her history with the battle of Adwa being central to the fight for freedom from white colonizers. In addition, the Atlantic Slave trade affected the entire African continent directly and indirectly as colonizers like the Italians gained strength from the previous exploits of their conspirators, Portugal, Britain and Spain.

*“It is our duty to teach our children the truth about Black History and Freedom. The white man’s story is that out of the warmth of his feelings, he set us free!! Nothing could be further from the truth. Dr Eric Williams of Trinidad in his book **Capitalism and Slavery**, as well as other black writers have made it clear that the abolition of slavery was linked to the industrial revolution and the introduction of machinery which showed that it was more economical to use machinery than to depend upon the use the slaves.”*

As Ambassador Thompson pointed out in his presentation in the Symposium, we need to understand what freedom means to us as individuals and countries. The evolution of the Pan Africa movement in the 1900’s springs from this concept of black Liberation with persons like W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, Muhammed Ali, C.L.R. James, Kwame Nkrumah, George Padmore, Jomo Kenyatta, Sylvester Williams, men from the continent and the Diaspora who fought racism and contributed to the strength of Nkrumah’s call ‘*Go back to your countries and fight for independence. Seek first independence by all the means at your disposal and after that all good things will follow*’. After slavery, we of the Diaspora have continued the Pan African movement with strong support from Garveyites and those of the Ras Tafari faith. We have called for repatriation to Africa and presented numerous petitions to the UN on reparation (The Jews united and received over \$6 billion, the Polish people received \$249 million from the Germans and Japanese Americans received \$1.3 billion from the USA, the Eskimos \$1.5 billion from Canada). We have not however been clear and unified



in our demands and therefore have not identified the value of both monetary and non-momentary awards. We have come a far way but there is still a great deal to accomplish. We will never accomplish true freedom and emancipation without liberating ourselves from mental slavery and colonization of African minds, knowing the truth of our history and traditions. We must tell our own stories and recreate the Africa of our dreams with our collective hands being *“made strong by the hand of the Almighty”*

The vision of the Marley Foundations revolves around the concept of individualized and community-based care. As the RMF states *“the aged be protected, the infants nourished and cared for”*. The focus is clearly on the poor, deprived, disposed and oppressed. Bob and Rita Marley came from very humble beginnings. As Bob grew in understanding of the Rastafari faith he turned to music and farming to keep himself and his children alive. Ethiopia is challenged to achieve the Millennium Development goals by 2015, especially that of reducing poverty to less than half of the present level and having primary and secondary education for all. Traveling to Shashamane brought the reality home to us as we saw the poverty of the rural poor echoing the poverty of the rural poor in Ghana where RMF now works. It is not coincidental therefore that Rita Marley is consumed with this life purpose ensuring that the Foundations are devoted exclusively to the needs of the poor and oppressed, having experienced what it is to be in this position.

*“Many people understand now what this celebration is all about. They now realize that Bob Marley’s message is for everyone especially the poor. It is a great thing for Ethiopia (words from a Headmaster in Shashamane)”*

Driving in unmarked vehicles around Addis and outside of Addis, children call to us, *Bob Marley, Jamaicans, freedom*, evidencing approval and identification. This is important as we realize that the celebrations have accomplished much in a short space of time. But as the saying goes, to whom much is given, much is expected”. The celebration maintains the tradition of being non-political *“Rasta*



*don't work for no CIA*", going beyond that as Bob almost lost his life in Jamaica working tirelessly to bring opposing political parties together. The context therefore is spiritual not political, emotional not commercial, and most of all historical. The Marley family has sponsored this month long event to hundreds of thousands of US dollars, supported by such companies as Coca Cola, Sheraton hotels, Ethiopian Airlines and such agencies as UNICEF, World Bank, African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa. There were undoubtedly weaknesses in production of the event with some artistes, presenters and participants not showing due to transportation and contractual difficulties. We did not feel however, that this should detract from the intent of the family, ie to perform in and celebrate with the people of Ethiopia. This massive outlay of funds by the Marley family has also been supported by the government re-paving and giving Maskel Square a face-lift. It is not surprising that the government should see it fit to bestow on Mrs. Marley, the organizer of the event and founder of the Bob and Rita Marley Foundations, honorary citizenship to this country, allowing her to hold a special thanksgiving dinner in His Imperial Majesty's palace, co-hosted by Her Excellency the First Lady W/ro Azeb Mesfin.

Events over the month included a free concert in Maskel Square, launching of books by Cedella Marley-Minto (CEO Bob Marley Music and Catch A' Fire clothes line) and Nana Rita Marley, an exhibition of photos of Bob and Africa's history, unveiling of a plaque in honour of Bob Marley in Africa Emancipation Square and the naming of a stadium in Shashamane to be built by the government and the Foundations. Maskel Square had some 500 paying VIPS at 100USD each with over 300 thousand persons free and ETV paying no broadcasting fees so that all of Ethiopia could enjoy. Every year, since 1981, the Foundations have celebrated Bob' birthday all over the world. On stage at Maskel Square, were the mother of Bob Marley, the wife of Bob Marley, his seven sons, wives, two of his three daughters, husbands and many, many grandchildren. Give Thanks Jah Rastafari.



**The celebration has accomplished many goals:**

1 The entire world once again joins in the celebration of Bob Marley's birthday, this year with the additional focus on Ethiopia under the banner of Africa Unite.

2 The historic Symposium held at the UN Conference Centre brought together 250 youth, artists, academics and activists from the continent and the Diaspora. Both the Plan of Action and the Ten Point Agenda generated by the Youth detail the crises points at this time. They will be available on the website, [www.africa-unite.com](http://www.africa-unite.com)

3 The African world joins Ethiopia in recognition of the need for African Unity, while the rest of the world realizes the power of music as a unifying force.

4 Over the past year Ethiopia has experienced an awakening of unity amongst its peoples. Many youth are now experiencing a new sense of unity under the banner of Rastafari. We pray that it will continue, because as the Sankey hymn says "it is a hard road to travel and a mighty long way to go".

5 Ethiopia is once again centre stage under the banner of His Imperial Majesty. It is time that the world acknowledged that he was neither a thief, imposter or fraud. He is what he is, a direct descendant of the Solomonic dynasty, a descendant of the only monarchy in Africa, still loved by his people and an important figure in the history of African civilization and unity

Speaking on behalf of the Rita Marley Foundation, we see this 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration as historical, momentous and timely. We will do all in our power to continue the work with which we are charged. We would also like to take the opportunity to use this medium to express our thanks to all our co-sponsors, the many persons who took the opportunity to show us such kindness and special help, to the government of Ethiopia for recognizing the importance of this event and especially to the people of Ethiopia who have "stretched forth their hands unto God". He always answers prayer.