

Why Rastafari in Africa- South Africa - (Azania)



Talk dedicated to Bob Marley in the irits of hue man¹ Istory Month

Educational Talk: Why Rastafari in Africa – South Africa (17 – 23 February 2007)
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Ethekwini
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◇ Give thanks to Bob Marley Foundations Programme and Ethekwini Municipality to make the works of the Most High to be realised in this time.

¹ Refers to people of colour - men and women

CONTEMPORARY CHANGES IN SOUTH AFRICA (AZANIA): RASTAFARI COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE AT ETHEKWINI

By Ras Yada aka Ntokozo Mthembu

"Ethiopia, jealous of her freedom, has always had to struggle, both for the sake of her territorial integrity and for the preservation of her religious liberty"- H.I.M- Haile Selassie I.

The paper was prepared specifically to facilitate and sharing of knowledge and discussion about the history of Ethiopians in general and in this country in particular. In addition, it is a tribute to Bob Marley and as well as fulfilling the World Black History Month. In encouraging such discussion, the paper will be brief on the past, present and the future of indigenous populace in relation to the Rise of Rastafari Livity in the "post apartheid" South Africa.

The paper's overall objective is to give light, truth (Refer John 8:32) and revelation of the social organisation of in Ethiopia – Africa people of origin. Maybe, before we talk of the origins of the so called African people, it will be wise to look at the origins of South Africa in terms of naming as the practice that has been around since times of old (Refer Daniel 1: 6-7). The purpose of the name change is to affect change in character, as names describe personality on individual and some key events in his life. Therefore, even the name of South Africa was about that when it was changed from Monomotapa. That poses a great challenge to the indigenous people to whether they are happy with the colonialist name or change to Azania is a revolutionary and anti-colonialist name that refers to a total liberated state of South Africa and also preferred by the majority of African patriots instead of the colonial settler name 'South Africa' (Pheko, 1992:113). The name also refers to whom Jehovah hears taken from *The Original African Heritage Study Bible- King James Version* (1996: 29) James C. Winston Publishers: Nashville. Lest we forget that the name Azaniah was once a name of man in Biblical times whose son and others made covenant of separation from the people of the land unto the law of JAH (Refer Nehemiah 10:1 – 28).

- The brief historical social formations in Monomotapa

The origin of indigenous people in this region is proven by vast literature that they come from the north of Africa and moved to this part of Ethiopia in different times of history. Those periods of reaching or arrival times in this area are characterised by the fact that indigenous populace are given different names that tend to mislead the true facts of life. For example, how can people of the same melanin skinned people are regarded as different people. I will argue that this land, Ethiopia and those in the diasporas and the Black in general shows that socio-political historical developments were literally destroyed. But we know that no matter they can spread their false teachings in trying to misinform us through programmes such as Afrikaans notion. The colonisers define the first Ethiopian who reached this south part of Ethiopia of which used to be called Monomotapa and now South Africa or Zuid Afrika. The western colonisers when they first officially declared their colonisation process in 1652 and referred to this country South Africa. As they were on their naming spree, changing altering whatever they can to justify their false ownership to the coming generation.

In order for us to have a better understanding of what was happening in this part of the continent of which is called today – Africa. Lest we forget that indigenous, people had their own social order, of which I argue that it was *theocratic order*. The theocratic order was and still characterised by principle such as "*ubuntu*". *Ubuntu* emphasised that there must be no unequal treatment in economy, socially and politically. We need not to forget that the battering economic exchange system that was not depended on the monetary system.

When it comes to the labelling of indigenous people based on their presence in the land. The first indigenous populace they met they labelled them as "*Hottentots*" who were surviving on their land. When colonisers started to reach to inner land in the 1870s, they met "*Abathwa*" the San people or sometimes are called *Bushmen* (Pygmy in the Central Ethiopia) Stadler (1987:37). Again, when colonisers reached the middle lands they met what they call "*Bantus*" as the strategy to alienate African people from themselves. Nkosi concurs by arguing

that a growing tendency towards greed and commercialisation of land, even by Africans and especially in urban areas and that contributes in gradually destruction of the sense of 'Ubuntu' of which is the basis of African spirituality within the theocratic settings - refer to Tafete (2003:89). Therefore, I will argue that it will be unrealistic to expect the success of "ubuntu" as a philosophy within the spacious of democracy, as it this philosophy - democracy represent something totally different and it also dismally failed to offer a "holistically approach to offer love and respecting of human beings, nature and other living creatures". In addition, the custom of asking for rain or making rain through the help of the ancestors and God still features strongly in some communities.

When the administration institutions- government were established the indigenous people were labelled as "kaffirs" and old grown up man called a "boy" and woman called "domestic" worker- who is forced to abandon her children and family. Just to mention few of the labels or names that are given to the indigenous Ethiopians. The colonisers look at these people as different people whilst in fact is same person but different settings.

Maybe, one can pose questions why colonisers do this and there are many possible answers that can attached to this mind set. Firstly, these things are meant to dehumanise, degrade and to serve the divide and rule principle of non-whites, as per western world civilisation. In addition, to instil fear, lies and illusion, to distort historical developments, in order the coming generation won't link up with their past history. Finally that will lead to a confuse the true settings of socio political set up, as part and parcel of consolidating their colonising programme. The colonising programme that is traced back to the times of Roman leaders like Constantine and beyond. When we are looking at earliest social transformation, we need to note that the west have some impact towards the movement of human race towards South.

Some of the influence by the Roman Empire is the establishment and changing of certain social settings such as the keeping of the Sabbath day and holidays. In addition, the introduction of western Christian Churches that perpetuated the white supremacy true racism, values and culture. For example, the Western World played a meaningful role towards scramble for Africa as early as 1700 Before Christian Era (BCE). Eventually, that campaign was "championed" by Roman Empire under the towards social transformation of which cannot be ignored of is the order by the Church Council of Laodicea circa 364 CE that stated that religious observances were to be conducted on Sunday, not Saturday. Sunday became the new Sabbath. They ruled: "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day." There are many indicators in the historical record that some Christians ignored the Church's ruling. Sabbath observance was noted in Wales as late as 1115 CE. Francis Xavier was concerned about Sabbath worship in Goa, India in 1560 CE; he called for the Inquisition to set up an office there to stamp out what he called "Jewish wickedness". A Catholic Provincial Council suppressed the practice in Norway in 1435 CE.

Other depressing events when we speak of the role of the church in social transformation, we remember the role played by the Western

Church like Roman Catholic Church is when the Pope divided Portugal and Spain into two halves in 711A.D. A major activity in this regard is the continuation of land dispossession (they call it scramble) of Africans of which culminated to be what they call it "slave" trade to Americas. This vicious trade benefited the Roman Catholic Church, as Bishop Bartholomew de las Casas and Pope Martin IV of the same Church endorsed it by receiving twenty-five cents per head (they told lies that would save their souls in case they die crossing triangular trade they will go to heaven) for each African slave (Ben-Jochannan, 1986). Another event is the battles fought by Princess of Kahina or Dahia against Islamic invasion of places that eventually today to be Morocco.

Whilst we talk about the historical political and economic transformation, we cannot forget to mention the Punic Wars that were about the control of shipping trade in the Great Sea (Clarke, 1986). Punic Wars that were preached overtly as religious wars whilst in fact they were for to open up doors for "Europeans to get out of Europe". Clarke highlights that eventually, everybody goes to Pope to partake in the slave trade and would declare that: "you are both authorised to reduce to servitude all infidel people. If they are not Christians

they are fair game for slavery”(1986). Another event of 1492 that need not to be forgotten is the death of the non-Moslem Emperor Sonni Ali of West Africa- Songhay when he returns from battle in the South and got replaced by a devout Moslem who installed Islamic priest and preachers to the University of Sankore. Therefore, for over 600 years Africa experienced great devastation that it never had before, the Arab slave trade and European slave trade.

For the purposes of this talk this paper will focus to the Africa South socio-political developments. As we know that the colonisers after they landed in the shores of this mighty land they establish their administration institution – the state as the means to gain control over and to gain some legitimacy in their thieving exercise disguised as the civilisation (Stadler, 1987:34). As the colonisers advance their evil work they forced Africans to a quasi-feudal relationships on the land as later they were moved away from being peasants to be proletarianised labour force (Stadler, 1987:36). The so called the then state helped whites on their process of colonising indigenous people as they passed various colonising economic policies that favours western world development. In addition, Europeans expropriated land and labour for their farming, industries and the mining industry. Stadler (1987:34) confirms this scenario when citing that whites enjoy the largest share of wealth, income economic opportunity and access to education and whilst Blacks, Africans in particular were excluded from their own socio-political development and denied opportunity based on the common political rights that perpetuates western domination. The then the government of the day introduced the tariff protection system that was designed principally to ensure that the ‘civilised labour’ (whites) policy that rendered effective in the industrial sector (1987:86). Furthermore, due to the industrialisation and the effects of political structures of which established to coerce industrial labour force into existence into different sectors of the industrial economy due to the influence of practices established during European settlement in the Cape and their expansion into the interior.

The structures of social and political control were maintained during the period of industrialisation and of which was transformed to suit the particular requirements of the new industrial economy. The white settlers established trekker republics in what they labelled as Natal and across almost all parts of Azania and this they achieved it through combination of violence and “diplomacy” as they had guns over spears and that led to the establishment of British colonial order (Stadler 1987:37). The Africans emerged as the so called peasants in the pre-mining period as they took advantage of market opportunities that opened up and this stratum was destroyed by the so-called demands of the mining industry for labour (Stadler 1987:37). The rise of mining industry, especially gold mining led to the transformation of social and political structures of colonial in South Africa and it produced an effective absolutism over the pastoral and agrarian communities of southern Africa and also coerced hundreds of thousand of labourers (Africans) into employment on the mines (Stadler 1987:37). In the so called Natal indigenous populace refused to enslaved and the colonisers opted to

Stadler argued further that:

...in 1894 the Cape parliament passed the Glen Grey Act in ensuring that some elements in the community would become landless and imposed hut and poll taxes of which forced such individuals to enter the labour market. So, the state played vital role in establishing the whites colonial empire as passed various legislations such as the Native Labour Relations Act of 1911 of was meant for the state to maintain the African workforce discipline, control and excluding them from other works such as blasting whilst incorporating African ‘indunas’ and ‘boss boys’ and supervisory roles performed by whites (Stadler, 1987:40).

The Native Land Act of 1913 and 1936, Labour Relations Acts, Soil Conservation of the 1920s, and as well as Trust Act of 1920s secured a cheap and controllable labour force and a close relationship between miners and the state (Stadler, 1987:42). May *et al.* (2000) argued the cheap labour system upon which South African capitalism relied appears to be an important factor that resulted in entrapping mechanisms and this system relied upon the existence of rural population unable to produce sufficient for its needs. It is in this light that

one need to understand rural poverty. May *et al.* extend this argument further, highlighted that terms of commodity markets in which home-produced goods could be sold; the monetised economy of South Africa has meant that poor communities have become dependent upon the large-scale formal cash economy (2000). Stadler argued that the colonialists operated on the premise that the government of the day tried to solve shortage of labour through importing of Chinese indentured labour to the goldfields as the dominating mining industry demand more labour (1987:45). May *et al.* (2000) argued the cheap labour system upon which South African capitalism relied appears to be an important factor that resulted in entrapping mechanisms and this system relied upon the existence of rural population unable to produce sufficient for its needs.



Source: www.map-of-africa.co.uk/images/physical-map-a...

- Current socio-economic developments

The current socio-economic developments in this country is characterised by the anger of workers protesting against continuous alienation from their land, the slave working conditions all sectors were and are still deteriorating further (Standing, 1999:4). The deteriorating of working conditions are characterised by the rise of flexible and insecure labour market that is advantageous to the capitalists as it is political in nature (Standing, 1999:86). On other side some workers lost their lives because these actions that were directed to the capitalist and their machineries. The capitalist administration organs defended it and workers continue losing benefit and capitalist increase the life span and new benefits from the governments in the form of tax relief and enforcement of cheap labour mechanisms (Baskin, 2000:53).

The interesting part is that the few whites still spoil themselves with the wealth and vast hectares of land that was stolen in the name of primitive accumulation by forcing the indigenous populace off their land in order to sell their labour power as civilisation (Baskin, 2000:53; Pheko, 1990:1). Another interesting part is this white minority has managed to win

the hearts and minds of the few African elite to endorse the old broad daylight robbery as the answer (Noyoo, 1999:65). This broad daylight robbery is highly celebrated especially by mostly whites globally as the “perfect example” that world should know, where the thieves are forgiven and robbed kept in prison for taking crumbs (De Villiers, 2000:35). The numbers of Africans in prison then and now still confirm this and as well as the number of whites of still occupy the amount of land in South Africa.

The oppressed are expected to meet these demands of the western capitalists whilst what was the land stolen remains the property of the thieves. Furthermore, what is said about the whole saga is that the most respected and known to be “sober” individuals or leaders have bought into what I call the “blind folded” approach. This approach tends to ignore and refuse that Africans were unjustly treated or robbed and there is a need and to come up with means to address the wrongs done against them uncompromisingly. Today this manifests itself in various segments in our communities. For example, the townships are not destroyed and they claim to be ‘developed’ through programmes such as Inanda, Ntuzuma and Kwa Mashu programmes. I’m saying this is still the same old dirty trick of colonisers because how can you upgrade a place that was designed specifically to pack the colonised slaves not for decent living standards. If some of us dispute this fact they must visit Inanda, Ntuzuma and Kwa-Mashu - (INKⁱ) and for themselves. Furthermore, this is visible in particular in politics that happened to be agenda of today’s social movements or arenas, as these movements or arenas tend not to be sure about their direction or their destiny or port o call. But what is more visible is that there are lot of marches, lot of wearing t/shirts with writings and so forth, voicing their dissatisfaction against the rulers of the day everywhere capitalism is the order of the day.

On other hand, the majority of the colonised people languish in prisonsⁱⁱ, pauperised in the streets of the main cities of western glories, and landless. Furthermore, the colonised continue to be told that everybody is equal and they can ‘buy’ back stolen land as part of the redistribution programme from the inheritors of stolen wealth through the so called primitive accumulation and are given free ride to sell land at will whilst protected through the so called property rightsⁱⁱⁱ. There is no place under the sun and this mighty Earth you ever heard that the colonised surrendered their share to the ‘fathers’ of primitive accumulation. It is very foolish and stupidity by the inheritors of the spoils of colonisation to think that Africans in general will succumb to the world of forgetfulness that their land was stolen. There is no way that Africans can just forget that the western and some eastern colonisers have expropriated land differently in the Africa. The following table just account to few countries and excludes the data concerning the eastern expropriation.

Estimated	Percentage	Country
Less than	2%	Tanzania
.. ..	5%	Zambia
.. ..	7%	Botswana
About	47%	Namibia
..	50%	Zimbabwe
..	50%	Swaziland
More than	95%	South Africa

Table 1. – Statistics of the land expropriated in some African countries.

There is no way they can do that whilst they languish in ‘mjondolos’^{iv} and die everyday without proper safe living place. On other the government of the day purports to be redressing the past land injustices whilst it continue guaranteeing the stolen land to the thieves, as it has transfer less than 3% of land back^v to the indigenous populace and also continue means such as land tenure^{vi} and the restitution^{vii} to ensure the colonial masters. This confirms what said by Bishop Abrahams when he argues, “we won’t be at 30 percent until 2054, [as South Africa move] at this rate” (House, 2006). The continuous of turning a blind eye on the institutions and as well as the urgent need for the church to revisit the land question seriously, as it is a major landowner in South Africa^{viii}. Steve Biko emphasised this before the white apartheid security police martyred him in September 1977. When he said that: -

“... above all, we Black people should keep in mind that South Africa is our country and that it belongs to us. The arrogance that makes the white people to travel all the way from Holland to come and balkanise our country and shift us around has to be destroyed ... Whereas, Whites were guests to us on arrival in this country, they have now pushed us to a 13% corner of the land and are acting as bad hosts in the rest of the country. This we must put right” (Pheko, 1992:107).

Therefore, this type of approach in addressing the economic and socio-political problems, it seems to be different from the normal approaches that are normally adopted by the individuals in addressing their problems. Because I believe that the individuals approach is meant for the safeguarding what one can consider what is rightful theirs except if I come from another planet not Earth. If that is the case, that will mean my African people have been robbed in broad day light by the party of gangs conniving with the so called queens, kings, sons and daughter and inheritors of Europe's stolen wealth. I'm saying this because the same Europeans countries and some segments of the East countries still rejoice in the riches of the so-called Africa^{ix}.

South Africa currently is regarded as the 'Rainbow Nation' that is characterised by the segments of the poor in the periphery of the city that live in Slums or informal settlement. The periphery is characterised by high number of unemployed and landless indigenous people. The working Black poors, the rising Black middle class, the segment of the few poor whites, the segment of white middle class, the super rich whites and lastly, the roving rich whites that are mostly related to business, the so called tourists and professional in the academia that perpetuates the neo-liberalists agenda (Mthembu, 2005:18).

- A future without a total liberation of the Ethiopian race equals total destruction

For us to be able to face our future with clear (under) overstanding, that is challenge that is posed to each and everyone who is committed to total liberation of the race that is under fire in terms of genocide. Genocide that is faced indigenous populace manifests itself through diseases such as HIV/AIDS, poverty – malnutrition, imprisonment, and quarantined in the slave camps called township.

Therefore, the choices the government makes, political survival would always be uneven against economic viability because of the inequalities created by apartheid as well as the mounting pressure from globalisation (Karumbidza, 2001a). Karumbidza (2001a) noted that Bernstein argued that:

The capitalist landed property/ agriculture seeks to expunge or deny the foundations of its historical formation in land expropriation, brutal labour regimes and state support. Its position today, if anything, is strengthened by the confirmation of bourgeoisie property right in general, and, beyond that, by the economic policies and practices of the government. [This] capitalist landed property/ agriculture stakes its place in the new South Africa on the claim of its 'efficiency in a non-racial capitalism, while white farmers retain a *de facto*, if no longer *de jure*, near monopoly of resources and institutional, as well as economic, power in the countryside (Bernstein, 1997: 22).

The survival of people depended on the changing or repenting from their evil ways of trusting on illusions, bowing to foreign gods and reaches out to Jah the Creator of everything (Psalm 68:31-350). In other words we as the Ethiopians we need to go back to the Theocratic Order not democratic order that sustain and perpetuate white supremacy through liberalist programmes. In addition, “the elitist aspects of liberal democratic theory find new currency as the alliance of reformers and moderates commits itself to a form of politics. That preserve the central pillars of capitalist society, ensuring that entrenched power holders – especially the bourgeoisie – maintain a veto over the pace, content and institutional form of the new democracy” (Ginsburg *et al*, 1997:113).

This is confirmed by the fact that the Department of Land Affairs (DLA) dismissed the call to address the subsistence land needs of the poor and instead it focused its attention on the commercialisation proposal of the World Bank that aimed at advancing full-time black commercial farmers (Karumbidza, 2001b). In addition, the ANC adopted the “willing-buyer, willing-seller” option for land reform as this was consistent with its market-driven economic policy (Karumbidza, 2001b). The racially skewed legacy of land distribution in South Africa has not changed as less than 2% of the country’s 122 million hectares of land has changed hands through this programme since 1994, while 19 million poor and landless rural people and seven million poor and landless urban people need land (Mngxitama et al, 2004).

In closure, for Ethiopian people to be able to seek or define our future, we need not to forget where we come from as the people who are rejected in their own land. We must revert back to our roots as the solution to the problems of today, we need not to forget the ancient Egypt that bares our historical testimony that enable to rebuilt our culture and truly Ethiopian/ African paradigm of what humans ought to be and become (Karenga,1989). So, for everyone to survive this challenging time is to wake up and live and abide the Nazarite Vow to gain strength (Judges 16:17).

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ⁱ INK Project is a programme initiated by the Ethekwini Municipality to “improve” township despite the fact those houses were built for a temporal status and apartheid planners were not concerned about the healthy and conducive environment for the family needs. The African houses provided by the government are mostly characterised by the small stand of which is less than 300m SQ., poorly built no ceilings and internal services and despite the houses are built using conventional technology, the textures of these townships remain as those of “*umjondolo*” (Frescura, 2001:120).

ⁱⁱ This type of development resembles the 1980s, epoch that is known for the state oppression because during this period 70% were mostly from Black communities and regarded as activists (Good, 2003:15). But why today jails are still packed has been ushered and who are still the majority prisoners – Black/white?

ⁱⁱⁱ This type of western development tend deliberately deny the fact that African communities are predominately agrarian and accordingly, their foundations are in land and usage (Mafeje, 1991:67).

^{iv} Informal settlements are normally built out of old building material such as planks, corrugated iron, cardboards and plastic.

^v Furthermore, according to Nkosi the land that has been redistributed so far it only about 50,000 people have benefited.

^{vi} The Tenure Security Reform element has had dismal failures because the farm dwellers and other tenants continue to be evicted from the land of their ancestors in big numbers despite the government’s attempts to secure the rights of the victims.

^{vii} For example, the Land Restitution Component, meant to help the previously evicted communities to reclaim their ancestral land, get an alternative piece of land and/or get compensated, is seen as a disaster. Out of about 25,000 claims, six have been finalized and only about 20 are in the Land Claims Court for further negotiation, settlement or ratification. In land redistribution only about 50,000 people have benefited.

^{viii} Maybe programmes such as the Church Land Programme and the Community Organizations Resource Centre (CORC) to perform an audit may influence other churches to looking at this issue.

^{ix} Refer to Bond, P. (2006:14). Multinational Capital’s Responsibility for Africa’s Resource Extraction Crisis. OpenSpace, Vol. 1 No.4, June 2006. University of Botswana