

Today, no exception.  
bob marley brought  
into



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Today, more than ever before, the role played by music in shaping our thought systems and our interactions with others can never be underestimated.

It is safe to argue that music has not only been able to transcend cultural and racial boundaries to find appeal universally, but has also assisted civilizations across the world to find their own exclusive social niche, bringing them together with other individuals and societies that collectively share the same interest (Durant, 2010). The reggae music genre has particularly been instrumental in communicating the message of resistance against political and social systems that appear biased to the interests of the blacks not only in Jamaica where the genre originated, but also across the world (Alvarez, 2008). Through sampling some of lyrics of Bob Marley, the proclaimed founder of the Rasta movement, this paper will purpose to show how the musical messages of resistance to political and social systems have served to fuel social decadence and crime in contemporary world.

It is a well known fact that music is a communicative apparatus that is used and shared by individuals around the world to emphasize their values and articulate new notions. Reggae music is no exception. Bob Marley brought into the world revolutionary ideologies of love, peace, unity, and independence, all wrapped together in a message of political revolution to free the blacks from the colonial masters that had invaded Africa and other parts of the world (Alvarez, 2008). His Redemption Song in particular rallied the blacks to be strong in the face of white domination using the following lyrics: " Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds, have no fear of atomic energy, cause none of them can stop

the time. How long shall they kill our prophets, while we stand aside and look? Ooh! Some say it's a part of it: we've got to fulfill the book" (Elyrics. Net, 2010, para. 2).

Marley may have had very valid reasons for singing against the system especially with the realization that racism and subjugation of blacks was at its peak during his era. His lyrics together with contributions of other black civil rights activists such as Malcolm X and Martin Luther King greatly assisted Africans and black Americans to nurture their own identity and demand for recognition as human beings rather than slave subjects (Alvarez, 2008). Bob in particular was able to question authority while vividly portraying the agony and suffering of the black community through music. It is therefore sad to note how his legacy has been used to cause social decadence and acts of crime in the name of Rastafarian movement (Rommen, 2006). Roots reggae and its teachings have become deeply entrenched in the lifestyles of many people across the world. The real value of the music, however, has undergone great transformations mostly to the negative. In the U. S.

, for example, " reggae has tended to be the soundtrack for college kid's ganja smoking rather than spiritual or political struggle" (Miner, 2003, para. 2). This scenario is replicated around the world, where reggae music is increasingly becoming identified with drug-taking behavior more than the ideals it represented some few decades ago mainly due to personal habits and drug life of a few musicians. This problem can be traced back to the issues of self and identity. According to Stets & Burke (n. d.), "...by taking the role of the other and seeing ourselves for others' perspectives, our <https://assignbuster.com/today-no-exception-bob-marley-brought-into/>

responses come to be like other's responses, and the meaning of the self becomes a shared meaning" (p.

4). In equal measure, the kids internalize the images of marijuana-puffing musicians and carry them as their own, hence falling into the bottomless pit of drugs. Reggae music has also enhanced moral decadence through the misconception of its lovers that it advocates gangbanging, violent political and social revolutions, and degradation of life (Alvarez, 2008). In sociological perspectives, this problem can be attributed to the issue of self-concept.

As individuals' attempts to cut an image of who they are to their own selves and other members of society, they inexorably develop a vivid perception of their own personality (Stets & Burke, n. d.). The problem lies in the fact that individuals who have a negative identity are more likely to develop a negative self-concept of their own personalities.

Going back to reggae music, it is evidently clear that the message was directed to the poor black masses in society to put their acts together and rise above the challenges presented to them by the wealthy people. But due to negative identity and negative self-concept ingrained upon the youths by a few busybodies, we have reached situations where the youths are taking other people's property by force in the name of equal rights and justice (Shorter, 2004). This scenario has been experienced in Zimbabwe and South Africa, where blacks forcefully seize property belonging to the whites in an attempt to redeem their own status. According to Alvarez (2008), "...reggae has emerged as one vehicle for indigenous and other marginalized populations to articulate their struggles against incursions of transnational

capital into the local communities” (p. 576). This is a good struggle, but in the modern world, it is been carried in ways that often deny the rights and dignity of others. In some African communities, members subscribing to this movement maim and kill other blacks who do not subscribe to their ideals not mentioning the fact that they forcefully circumcise their women (Shorter, 2004). This only helps to increase moral decadence in society.

Alvarez (2008) further postulates that “...it is particularly evident that the deeply gendered nature of indigenous reggae often replicates much of the male-dominated and hyper-masculine character of the larger music industry, indigenous communities, and national societies in which these artists and their fans reside” (p. 593). Many contemporary reggae artists have deviated from the ideals of the 1960s and 1970s reggae to bring their own world views. For example, many modern reggae artists equate resistance as presented in Bob Marley’s songs to some form of warrior-like clandestine activity (Alvarez). This has had a negative impact on the lifestyles of the youth who learn and imitate what they hear or see in the environment. In sociological perspectives, it is evidently clear that much of the learning and socialization is facilitated by the environment (Rommen, 2006). In this case, it can be argued that negative socialization occurs to the youth who listen to such messages, further necessitating moral decadence.

To conclude, it can be firmly stated that reggae continues to cause social decadence and acts of crime in mainstream society, not because of what it is or what it stand for, but because of issues of negative self-concept, negative identity, and negative socialization processes. Bob Marley, the founder of the music genre, had very good intentions in rallying the black population in

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resisting against racism, subjugation, mistreatment, and poor living conditions that were prevalent among the blacks due to overbearing political and social systems. Nevertheless, individual and societal factors have come into play to change that message into a platform of engaging in crime and drugs under the banner of resistance to the system (Rommen, 2006).

Certainly, this is the wrong approach.

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