

# Censorship of dancehall music

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Music is the free expression of the ideas, emotions and way of life of a people in such a way that it appeals to our senses, thus making it enjoyable. But when this expression becomes offensive in the sense that the ideas conveyed are considered socially unacceptable, then it is no longer allowed its reign of liberty. When this happens courses of action are taken by those deemed responsible, to protect what is in their eyes, the true virtue of society. The group of people responsible is the Broadcasting Commission, and the questionable course of action they have chosen is to censor the only genre of Jamaican music that not only gives our music an edge, but that also provides a pellucid look into the way of life of people in the inner city and the struggles they endure due to poverty, the controversial, yet popular, Dancehall Music.

Music censorship is the suppression of musical material considered to be objectionable, harmful or inconvenient to either the government or various media organizations as determined by a censor. Censorship is present in two main forms; partial and total censorship. Partial censorship, when utilized, edits the parts or lyrics of a song or album seen as offensive. After editing, one now has what is known as the clean version of the song. Complete censorship, however, includes total omission of the song from airplay. But why is this done? Is the Broadcasting Commission genuinely interested in protecting and preserving society's values, or is there a hidden agenda to slowly collapse a significant part of our musical culture on the premise of improving it? However, if their intentions are true, one has to agree with partial censorship since the content of some songs is too explicit and

offensive to be appropriate, but total censorship is too drastic. Every human has the guaranteed right to freely express his or her ideas.

Total censorship would be like a knife cutting the cord of self expression. This creates a suppressed feeling in the individual or musician, leading to frustration, and in the end anger rears its head. As a result of this stifling of ideas, the artists and their fans become rebellious, so instead of appreciating authority, they reject it vehemently. They soon require another outlet to vent their feelings and ideas, and this outlet will most likely be a violent one. So instead of protecting society, those in control are unknowingly laying a role in its gradual disintegration. It is difficult to comprehend why Dancehall is being censored now while such extreme measures were not being taken in the past. Thus said, because Dancehall has not undergone any significant change for it to now be considered toxic.

Dancehall music emerged in the late 1970s and 80s. This era was dominated by Roots Reggae music, where the main focus was on political and social oppression, so when Dancehall arrived it provided a breath of fresh air to the music industry. Instead of focusing on oppression, Dancehall took on a liberal approach by highlighting the changes occurring socially and politically. For example, the replacement of Michael Manley's PNP government with Edward Seaga's JLP party was thoroughly mentioned in its music. Instead of adopting the meditative undertones of Roots Reggae, that exist solely to contemplate or muse on the problems in society, Dancehall was more active since it expressed opinions of the artists and the people to what in their eyes is

justifiable. The content of Dancehall music did not linger on social problems. It shed light into the lives of Jamaican people.

Normal lives that included love, sex, violence, dancing and so on. These aspects are described accurately, to the point where they are considered to be explicit. But these vivid descriptions do not dwell on explicitness, but rather on the intensity of Jamaican life. As aforementioned Dancehall music provides a detailed description of what is happening in society. For example Buju Banton's " Boom Bye Bye," though controversial, accurately portrays Jamaican views while hinting their lack of tolerance for homosexuality and the violent and aggressive attitudes toward it. It is understandable if one thinks that Dancehall music has changed, because it has. That change however, is not in a variation in its content, as many people might assume, but rather the attention Dancehall music is receiving.

It is becoming popular with each passing day, not only locally, but also internationally, with many of our Dancehall albums dominating international music charts.