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## Quest for the Utopian World: The Songs of Bob Marley

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*(More than machinery we need humanity – Charlie Chaplin)*

### Abstract

Bob Marley is a renowned Jamaican musician, singer and composer. He was the one who introduced the reggae genre of music. He is not only a singer, but also a great rebel, who had composed innovative, informative, spiritual, and revolutionary. Marley's songs had a special place in the hearts and minds of humans. The songs addressed the Jamaican custom, culture and tradition, and he also focused on the typical social issues such as repression, slavery and imperialism that were on peak during his time. He stood against it and he used it in his songs as a weapon to bring peace and harmony. Moreover, his songs were concerned with the sufferings of the marginalized people in Jamaica. This paper scrutinizes the songs of Bob Marley and how his songs spread kindness, universal love, one heart and freedom to unite people as one accord.

**Keywords:** Reggae, Universal love, Peace and Utopia.

### Introduction

The universe saw diverse kinds of musicians who sang about both entertainment and their passion. However, some of them exception the above concerns which are concerned with the society. Notably, Bob Marley and Michal Jackson whose songs concentrated on the oppression of the African people, Particularly, Bob Marley's songs disclosed the suffering which was done by the British imperialists in his time. He was born in 1945, St. Ann's Parish, Jamaica, whose parents were mixed race, father was a British and mother was black African. At the age of fourteen he left his country and went to Kingston where he had started his music career. Marley became a local singer and converted to Rastafarian and slowly he got fame, his songs were not only entertaining , but also picturing the faith of Rastafarian , Jamaican culture, the injustice which is happened to the Jamaicans, love, dissatisfaction and peace. In short, he plays for social equality and justice. Some of his well-known songs: "Simmer Down" (1962), "Concrete Jungle" (1973), "Get Up, Stand Up" (1973), "War" (1976), "Redemption Song" (1976) "One Love" (1973), and "Smile Jamaican" (1976).

## Reggae as an Instrument

Reggae is a popular music that emerged in Jamaica during 1960s and it has become Jamaica's predominant music. In the beginning of 1970s, it is widespread all over the world, particularly, countries like Britain, the USA and African countries, because it speaks and supports the voice of the voiceless. According to the Dictionary of Jamaican English defines, "Reggae is based on 'ska,' an earlier form of Jamaican popular music and employs a heavy four-beat rhythm driven by the drums, bass guitar, electric guitar and the scraper, a corrugated stick that is rubbed by a plain stick"(Cooper 1). Moreover, the dictionary says that it expresses the sounds and pressures of the ghetto life that the tribulations of the native in Jamaica.

Bob Marley was one of the inaugural figures of Reggae; he had used this as a weapon to bring out light to the people and articulate social and economical injustice "its soundtrack was celebration of the defiant human spirit that regulates to the suppressed" (2). These suppressions and injustice go away only when the people can claim their rights; this thought was expressed in Marley's songs outstandingly, addressed in his monumental soundtrack "Get Up, Stand Up." It reveals the very idea of rights for which people have to ready to get it, depicts that the Africans did not enjoy their rights in their own land. At which time the 'Apartheid System' and 'Racism' largely existed on peak in the African countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, and Jamaica and even in the many parts of the USA. This cruel activity kills the livelihood of the people; do not enjoy their rights rather than they have been exploited by the imperialists. These bitter conflicts have changed Marley's thoughts and feelings, more importantly it reflects in his powerful verses which speak the pains of the Jamaicans and it paved the way to claim their privileges, particularly his top-notch soundtrack "Get up , stand up: stand up for your rights." The soundtrack opens as follows:

Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights!

Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights!

Get up, stand up: stand up for your rights!

Get up, stand up: don't give up the fight! (metrolyrics.com 1- 4).

In short, it discloses the very idea of the human rights which has been violating throughout the world. A few critics said that this song was written while he was in Haiti, the island of Hispaniola, east of Cuba. For critic Anderson, Marley touched upon the severe poverty was going on a daily basis in Haiti, at that movement drove him to compose this electrifying song. Here, he questions the capitalists and the imperialists saying that they are responsible for this poverty. Marley boldly replied to that the capitalist can deceive the people sometimes but not all the times which mean they are ready fight.

You can fool some people sometimes,

But you can't fool all the people all the time.

So now we see the light (What you gonna do?),

We gonna stand up for our rights! (Yeah, yeah, yeah!) (metrolyrics.com 36 - 40)

Furthermore, in which questions the meaning of life and what is worth living in life? He expressed that his against the imperialists and the capitalists because who do not know the meaning of life of others rather than destroying the people's life.

Marley gives an alarm to the people do not believe the capitalists' ideology which make people as slave.

I know you don't know

What life is really worth.

It's not all that glitters is gold;

'Alf the story has never been told:

So now you see the light, eh!

Stand up for your rights. Come on! (metrolyrics.com 7- 12)

On the whole, he called for all to get the rights from his 'Get Up, Stand Up' verse

### **Bob Marley and his Utopian world**

The term Utopia refers an imagined place where everything is perfect, in this the social justice can be achieved, good place for all, where there no is sex, gender, superior and inferior, class, race, black and white discrimination rather the place known for social liberty and world peace. It also underlines equality in politics, economics, government and justice. The term utopia is devised by Sir Thomas More in his *Utopia* (1516).

Bob Marley dreamt his own utopian world. It is depicted in his song "One Love", which listened by billions of people throughout the world. Marley's utopian world could be free, no there was no slavery, no apartheid system, no poverty, no war, and no separation between the people. He insisted the very idea of one heart and the one love. Therefore people can unite as one from which people can get harmony and peace. The idea of one love and one heart was also expressed Tamil poet Kaniyan Pungundranar as 'Every citizen is my kith and kin.' Marley underlined his utopian song with universal love, unity and pace, and he says that people should stop fighting and became one as follows:

One Love! One Heart!

Let's get together and feel all right

Hear the children cryin' (One Love!)

Hear the children cryin' (One Heart!) (metrolyrics.com,1-4)

The word 'children crying' that is not a actual crying, children are innocent by birth however, suffering for food and malnutrition, which displays Jamaican's poverty and economic depression. Even today in Jamaica people do not have the basic needs, electricity and education. In addition, the above words remind us that people are one and everyone has same sense of for each other and having one heart. It resonances that the national motto of Jamaica. Social unity and peace can be possible if all the people come together and celebrate our humanity. The following extract shows the power of humanity.

One love, one heart

Let's get together and feel all right

As it was in the beginning (one heart)

... I will feel all right. (metrolyrics.com, 15 – 18)

### **Conclusion**

The article has showed that the importance of humanity and harmony. It has depicted that Bob Marley is not only a musician but also a symbol of peace and unity. This research article has examined that Marley's songs lent themselves a kind of a Universalist reading for liberation.

And also it has showcased that his songs are revolutionary, innovation, mutiny and revolt against the social evils.

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