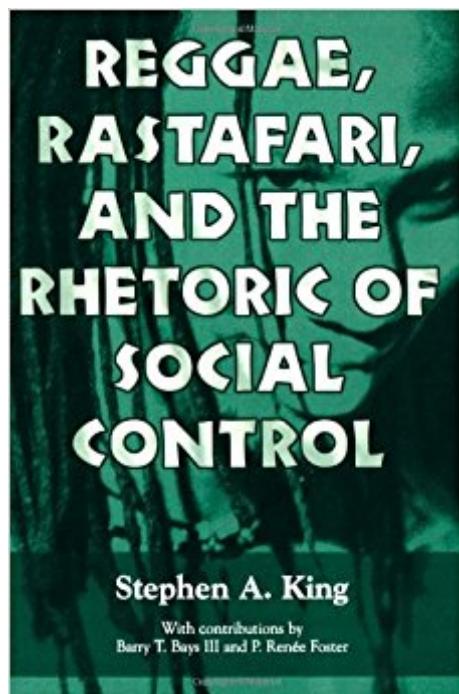


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Reggae, Rastafari, And The Rhetoric Of Social Control



Synopsis

Who changed Bob Marley's famous peace-and-love anthem into "Come to Jamaica and feel all right"? When did the Rastafarian fighting white colonial power become the smiling Rastaman spreading beach towels for American tourists? Drawing on research in social movement theory and protest music, Reggae, Rastafari, and the Rhetoric of Social Control traces the history and rise of reggae and the story of how an island nation commandeered the music to fashion an image and entice tourists. Visitors to Jamaica are often unaware that reggae was a revolutionary music rooted in the suffering of Jamaica's poor. Rastafarians were once a target of police harassment and public condemnation. Now the music is a marketing tool, and the Rastafarians are no longer a "violent counterculture" but an important symbol of Jamaica's new cultural heritage. This book attempts to explain how the Jamaican establishment's strategies of social control influenced the evolutionary direction of both the music and the Rastafarian movement. From 1959 to 1971, Jamaica's popular music became identified with the Rastafarians, a social movement that gave voice to the country's poor black communities. In response to this challenge, the Jamaican government banned politically controversial reggae songs from the airwaves and jailed or deported Rastafarian leaders. Yet when reggae became internationally popular in the 1970s, divisions among Rastafarians grew wider, spawning a number of pseudo-Rastafarians who embraced only the external symbolism of this worldwide religion. Exploiting this opportunity, Jamaica's new Prime Minister, Michael Manley, brought Rastafarian political imagery and themes into the mainstream. Eventually, reggae and Rastafari evolved into Jamaica's chief cultural commodities and tourist attractions. Stephen A. King is associate professor of speech communication at Delta State University. His work has been published in the Howard Journal of Communications, Popular Music and Society, and The Journal of Popular Culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stephen King's work deftly brings together a variety of source material including scholarly articles, short-lived and obscure Black Power and Rasta magazines, articles in mainstream newspapers and the lyrics of a wealth of reggae songs. The net result is a carefully reasoned, wonderfully illustrated and engaging analysis of the success and failures in the ongoing dialectic between middle-class Jamaicans and the Rastafarians. Highly Recommended. --Rob Bowman, author of *Soulsville, U.S.A.: The Story of Stax Records* Reggae, Rastafari, and the Rhetoric of Social Control is an extremely well-written, well-researched study of a significant and unique social movement that used music as a recruitment tool and as a means of solidifying membership. This book provides great insights into social movements, particularly those who use music as their primary tool of persuasion, and how establishments and effectively challenge them. --Richard J. Jensen, author of *The Words of Cesar Chaves* Stephen King's excellent examination and analysis of Rastafarian protest makes an important contribution of the study of social movements, perceptively illuminating the manner in which music operated rhetorically to combat the neo-colonial mechanisms of social control. This is a fascinating book that cuts across several disciplines. Those interested in rhetoric, cultural studies, and ethnomusicology, for example, will learn much by reading it. --James R. Andrews, professor emeritus, Indiana University

How Jamaica fashioned a tourist beacon from reggae music and the Rastafarian revolution

King's work reads a lot like a dissertation with its use of MLA format and citations. However, that does not diminish the importance of the focus of his work: how Rastafarianism, once a politically charged culture, was co-opted by Jamaica and morphed into a tourist friendly caricature. King's writing becomes a bit repetitive at times (in his analysis of *The Gleaner*) something the editors should have noticed. A pivotal study for those who are investigating reggae in academic circles despite the high price.

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