

Stealing land in the name of religion: A Rastafari religio-political critique of land theft by global imperial forces



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The issue of land has been central to Rastafari origins and ideological construct. Ethiopia, Africa, Babylon, Zion and Jamaica are symbols that point not only to physical location but also their ideological and psychological identity formation. This article uses Rastafari hermeneutics to critique the phenomenon of African Jamaican uprooting and dispossession of and from their land by powerful and global conglomerate forces that use the instrument of politics, economic and religion to accomplish their agenda. This article uses the Rastafari theological reflections, a theoretical framework that employs the phenomenon of faith, tradition and experience to interrogate the phenomenon of displacement of people through land theft. The religio-political narrative of Jamar Rolando McNaughton Jr, a young Jamaican reggae artist popularly known by his stage name *Chronixx*, will serve as the principal lens through which to interrogate the phenomenon of landlessness among the poor, primarily within the Jamaican context.

Introduction

Land constitutes the fundamental resource that forms the identity of a people. People without a strong connection to land become easy victims of political and economic exploitation. Some of the most life-threatening conflicts around the world are linked to issues surrounding the unjust seizure of land (Khan, Chaudhry & Qureshi 1986).¹ The problem is most severe in contexts where land is taken away forcibly from vulnerable people who do not have any political and economic power to resist the powerful forces, behind the seizure, that are usually supported and legitimised by extreme religious and political ideological agendas. Mahmood Hasan Khan (Khan *et al.* 1986) argues that the phenomenon of landlessness can best be described, 'on the basis of ownership of and access to agri-cultural land'.

The forceful removal of people from their land has become a contributing factor to the contemporary global crisis of migrants, on the move from fragile states, primarily in the Global South, whose economies are unable to provide the fundamentals of life to support their citizens: clean water, adequate health care, food sovereignty, good education and stable systems of good governance. In some contexts poor farmers are removed from their land to create mega farms for the powerful global agri-business or to facilitate a government-sponsored industrial complex (Tania 2009:7). In other cases, such as in Palestine, the occupying forces remove the Palestinians from their homeland in the name of 'national security'. In Tibet the national government facilitates mass movement of one ethnic group to the region to change the population dynamics and so neutralise what they perceive as threats from pro-independent-separatist groups (Tania 2009). A similar phenomenon exists in Irian Jaya with the mass movement of Indonesians who are transferred to the area to counter the perceived threats to 'national security' from the local indigenous Papuans who do not wish to be ruled by the Indonesians (Chauvel 2007:32–33). Finally in South Africa, in spite of 21 years of political freedom, economic freedom is still a far way off for the black impoverished majority population because of the failure to deal with urgent issues surrounding land justice (Cousins 1997).

This article argues that there is a missing link in classical black theology of liberation that has to do with its failure to seriously engage with the subject of land justice in the struggle of black people in its theological discourse and formulation. Failure to radically engage with this issue of land justice has contributed to the emergence of a tame and ineffective black theology of liberation

¹The phenomenon of landlessness describes a historical and structural organisation of a nation's economy in which land is excessively owned or possessed by a handful of people. See: Papers and Proceedings of the Third Annual General Meeting of the Pakistan Society of Development Economists (August 10–12, 1986) Part I (Autumn 1986), pp. 371–402.

because it does not adequately interrogate the Bible through the necessary lens of race consciousness and land justice for the African people. Therefore, the next phase of black theology of liberation project should address these issues which are long overdue. In this attempt, the article advocates that some foundational work for this theological reflection project have already been done through the writings of Marcus Garvey (Barnett 2012) and Rastafari theology that can be appropriated to serve as signposts for contemporary theological reflections.

This article uses the Rastafari theological reflections, as the framework through which the phenomenon of faith, tradition and experience will be utilised to interrogate the phenomenon of displacement of people primarily from the South, because of land theft. The 2014 song of the young Jamaican Rastafari reggae artist Jamar Rolando McNaughton Jr, (*Chronixx*) called '*Capture Land*² is used to interrogate the phenomenon of landlessness and un-just land dislocation of the poor. The narrative poignantly critiqued what he aptly described as those that steal land 'in the name of Christ'. Chronixx uses Rastafari ideological discourse to expose the massive land displacement and theft that have happened in Jamaica and the Caribbean since the period of Spanish and British colonialism within the region since 1492 and 1655. The phenomenon of landlessness has continued into the post-modern era on a global scale, especially in countries of the South with heightened systems of socio-economic inequality that facilitate unethical political and economic disorder in power relations.

Global land-grabbing movements

During the era of colonialism and slavery, the economic engine of growth rested on European nations mis-appropriating the lands of indigenous people, giving new names to their nations and randomly drawing new national borders that separated families and communities that had once lived together for many centuries. Land that was once corporately owned by people was stolen by European states and powerful plantation owners and then was transformed into assets that they put on the market to become privately owned or controlled. Within Latin America and the Caribbean the indigenous people's experience of being dispossessed of their lands resulted in their holocaust by the genocidal policies that were practised in the system of governance (Tschuy 1997:117). Lloyd Best argues that at the core of the Colonial plantation society land was organised around a one crop economy where landless labour was used to facilitate export production (Beckford 1972:9; Best 1968:287).

The western colonial era can be described as an intentional exercise on global land grabbing by European powers. Most of the land in countries that were once owned by the local people have been corruptly transferred and expropriated by the unjust colonial legal system and given to an elite

²'Capture land' is the phrase used by Rastafari reggae singer, Chronixx, to describe lands of the Americas which he claimed were stolen from the indigenous owners, many of whom experienced death through European genocidal policies.

minority class, many of whom had no desire to develop the land (Manley 1974). The process first began with exploiting the indigenous Indian labour force that ended in many cases with their genocide. With the Indian labour force not able to meet the needs of the colonialists because of systemic oppression, they turned their attention to Africans for the next phase of colonial exploitation and oppression. Africans were sourced from the West African lands and enslaved as commodities to serve colonial interest in gaining effective control over their captured lands (Williams 1970). They came primarily from the diverse tribal cultures of the West African region where Africans were forcibly captured and sold as commodities to European smugglers and traders (Edwards 1793:60–80; Lapage & Decamp 1960:61–65, 74, 84; Patterson 1967:134–135, 137–139). Of the millions who were uprooted and expelled from their home lands and taken to other people's land of the Americas, half of them did not survive the journey and the Atlantic Ocean. This was a journey of sheer human tragedy that created severe psychological upheaval and dislocation.

The large-scale acquisition of land that enriched the privileged few was not necessarily used in ways that contributed to the reduction of poverty within the society because they made better use of the land than when it was in the ownership of the poor.³ The socio-economic structure of many nations remained largely unchanged, with the rich minority owning and controlling most of the country's wealth with the majority surviving on the leftover resources. Colonialism as a system of governance thrived on the theft of land by any means necessary. This system utilised and exploited the availability of large, cheap and replaceable labour forces as a central tool in their land grab scheme. In the colonial society the model of governances promoted a weak educational system for the local people. It fostered underdevelopment through illiteracy and unskilled jobs that exploited landless workers by ensuring that the distribution of land ownership was given preference to the wealthy minority class (Manley 1974:27).

In the contemporary era, the legacies of the colonial era have bequeathed unresolved problems over land rights that are still creating painful conflicts. The countries that were once colonised are now politically independent. However, the globalised, neo-liberal economic order has ensured that there is no significant change or break in the model of economic ownership of the commanding heights of the economy because ethnicity and race still control the political and economic order within many nations (Tschuy 1997:126). In the neo-colonial contemporary era, new ethnic mix in population statistics brought on by the global movement of migrant workers has resulted in new forms of exploitation, but the reality of social and political exploitation through large expropriation of land has continued unabated. Within the context of Nigeria, Okello Oculi (1979: 63–74), writing on dependent food policy in that oil-rich country, argued that the mechanisation of agriculture has served to create

³<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03066150.2011.559009> (accessed October 13, 2015).

hunger and food dependence among the poor who have been made landless.

Also within the context of the interior of Malaysia, the global political economy of oil palm shapes the lives of local people who are left to cope with the fall out farming practices that result in environmental dystopia of deforestation and climate change (McCarthy & Cramb 2009:5). The local people's traditional tenure to the land has been superseded by the quest for profits by the oil palm plantation companies and other logging companies that use their economic powers to mute the voice of the state as they increasingly marginalise the people as they vie to compete for the control of land. The widespread use of plantations in Southeast Asia has exasperated the plight of the rural poor where their land is routinely taken by the state or powerful global economic interest for development. However, it is always the vulnerable people who are sacrificed for this 'national interest' and usually the promises of jobs fizzle out into the use of contractual, low-paid, non-local migrant labourers (Tania 2011:281–298). The global 'land-grab' strategy that operates under the neo-liberal economic world dis-order consistently thrives on displacing and excluding those that are deemed to be the most vulnerable from their land resources with false promises to provide them with an alternative form of employment.

Land theft through the abuse of religion

The issue of land justice is therefore a significant issue that necessitates theological interrogation because religion has consistently been used as a tool by the powerful to disenfranchise those without political and economic power over their land. The role played by the Roman Catholic Church and Protestant Missionary Churches has to a great extent functioned as allies with the colonial system in the unjust disinheritance of land that belonged to the poor and transferring to the powerful ruling class. According to Caribbean Theologian William Watty:

European superiority found expression in European contempt for all things aboriginal. The heathen mind was thought to be a *tabula rasa* on which the new faith could simply be branded. Whatever religious expression they encountered they were deemed futile and false by definition, and therefore easily eradicable or replaceable...The result was that evangelisation was merely a euphemism for conversion by force, indoctrination by rote, conformity through fear, and affiliation by imitation. (Watty 1994:429–436)

By dismissing the religions of Indians and Africans as 'False religions', the environment was created for a religious sanctioning of their oppression, because they were not regarded as fully human on equal cultural levels as Europeans (Lawson 1996:17–19). The three ingredients of economics, cultural stratification and God worked together as strategic allies to create the dominant process of acculturation that made the population susceptible to land theft. Therefore, apart from a few cases where some missionaries acted as

allies of the poor in buying back land for redistribution to the poor,⁴ religion has functioned as a conduit in the land theft strategy of colonialism. In the Jamaican context it was the Baptist Church that the African-Jamaicans regarded as the most credible and trustworthy of mission churches because they defended their interest in the struggle for political freedom and land justice through their Free-village land purchase and distribution to the black people.

One could argue that the church's close partnership with the colonial state had compromised their missional capacity to facilitate land justice on behalf of the marginalised people in Jamaica and the wider Anglo-Caribbean. Even with the movement towards political independence in the early 1960s and the rise in nationalism and the quest for social justice, the quest for land justice was embraced by political parties and not by Churches as a priority in their missional mandate to the people.

African retention facilitating resistance

Africans who came to the Americas took only their memories of their homeland that they retained and used to inform their oral traditions and maintain some form of human dignity in the midst of intense oppression. In the midst of all this they kept alive their cultural traditions and used them as a form of passive resistance. In spite of all the efforts by the religious and political apparatus of the colonial system that were geared at de-Africanising the Jamaicans of African⁵ descent their retention of the religio-cultural resources of their homeland went deeper into their sub-consciousness. Even when missionary Christianity was employed as a tool to de-culturalise Africans of their religious world view, the umbilical cord with the Motherland of Africa was too strong to be broken. As they sang Psalm 137 about the rivers of Babylon in their context of oppression, their embedded African hermeneutics led them to interpret Babylon as their exile land of oppression (Jamaica) and Zion as the homeland of Africa. In their songs, proverbs and poems, Africa was the *Promised Land* to which one day they would go home. The European colonial project among the Anglo-Caribbean Africans that they called West Indians sought to mis-educate them to develop self-hate for their African homeland and all things African and to embrace European colonising culture and its accompanying Christianity as God's will that liberated them from heathen Africa and their 'false gods' (Lawson 1996:31–47). However, they were not totally successful with their plan. Some Africans in the Caribbean such as the Maroons of Jamaica (Erskine 2007:130) succeeded in their revolt against British colonialism soon after their arrival in the country and created their own 'independent territories' in the hilly country away from the plantations

4.Missionaries linked to The Jamaica Baptist Church and the Jamaican Presbyterian Church took action in purchasing land in Jamaica to form Free villages for steps African-Jamaicans who were enslaved but became landless after emancipation was declared in 1836.

5.This was done primarily by denying the Africans to speak their own native languages and ensuring that Africans from the same ethnic groups were not placed on the same plantations to work.

in which they established self-rule following memories of governance in their African homeland.⁶ It was the granting of Emancipation in 1833 by Britain that put an official end to the enslavement of Africans in all British-ruled colonies (Williams 1970:280–327) that triggered the desire of Africans within the Caribbean but especially Jamaica to reconnect with their homeland. Their reading of the Bible especially the words of Psalm 68:32 ‘*Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God*’ gave the scriptural justification for their passion to reconnect with their home land (Slageren). They took the initiative to form local missionary societies that lobbied the British missionary societies to facilitate the desire to reconnect with their homelands with the Christian message. The Jamaican Baptist went to Cameroon (Russell 2000: 243–244, 260–262), The Anglicans from Barbados went to Sierra Leone (S.P.G. Digest 1898), the Presbyterian Church of Jamaica went to Calabar-Nigeria (Obinah 2011:278) and the Moravian Church of Jamaica went to Ghana (*History of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana*). These actions represented early tangible signs of their faith-seeking understanding and laying the foundations for the emergence of an Afro-centric contextual theology that must take seriously people’s identity and need for connectivity with their homeland.

‘Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand’

A continuous latent spirit that longed for repatriation existed among Africans in the Caribbean lands throughout the period of European colonialism in spite of the intentional indoctrination by the colonial authorities and missionaries to present the continent of Africa as a land of darkness and evil from which they were rescued. It was this legacy of ‘never forgetting Africa’ that was bequeathed that catapulted Marcus Garvey (1887–1940), the Pan-Africanist Jamaican Philosopher to read the signs of the times and make a strategic call for all black people within the Diaspora to become enlightened and to begin making plans for a return to their homelands because he viewed colonialism as an irredeemable ideological framework that was constructed to keep people of African descent in servitude while their labour and land are exploited (Sherlock & Bennett 1998:292–315). The philosophy and opinion of Marcus Garvey at the beginning of the twentieth century laid the foundations for the birth of the revolutionary religio-political movement and community known as Rastafari.

The role of Rastafari in the struggle for global land justice must be interrogated because they constitute one group of Africans in the Diaspora who have engaged in constructing theological reflections on land justice that have strategic relevance for contemporary development of African theologies. It is significant that the early beginnings of Rastafari theology of

6. According to Abioseh Nico, ‘The first decade of the nineteenth century saw the Maroons being brought as colonists to Sierra Leone. Originally they were mostly Fantis and Ashantis captured in Ghana (then the Gold Coast) and taken to the West Indies. Some of them escaped to the mountains in Jamaica occasionally intermarrying with the local Indians. Their name was probably derived from ‘Cimarron’ (mountain-top) rather than from their skin colour. They fought the British Government for a long time in Jamaica; some were brought to Sierra Leone where they lived in Freetown in an area extending from the Cotton Tree westwards to Wilberforce Village on the mountains’.

liberation coincided with the increasing signs of death pangs of European colonialism in the early twentieth century. African Jamaicans whose ancestors were enslaved never forgot their African homeland. Garvey laid the foundations for Rastafari African theology of liberation that made race consciousness and land justice central in the God talk of Africans in the Diaspora. This was based on his reading of the African experience of European colonialism that led him to conclude that ‘the suffering of black people was disproportionate to that of other people’ (Erskine 2007:118). When Haile Selassie was crowned as Emperor of Ethiopia in November 1930 Garvey saw this as a kairos moment for African liberation. Writing in his Jamaica Newspaper, *The Blackman*, he argued:

The Psalmist prophesied that Princes would come out of Egypt and Ethiopia would stretch forth hands unto God ... The great kingdom of the East has been hidden for many centuries, but gradually she is rising to take a leading place in the world and it is for us the Negro race to assist in every way to hold up the hand of Emperor RasTafari. (Lewis 1998:146)

Of particular emphasis in this comment by Garvey was his reference to Haile Selassie as *RasTafari*⁷ that the Rastafarians of Jamaica adopted as the name from which they acquire their identity and to signify their pledge of allegiance to Haile Selassie. Also, in this title they changed the discourse about their identity as prescribed by others to one that they intentionally embrace as ‘Children of Royalty’. Of theological significance was Garvey’s use of the scripture used by earlier African-Jamaicans to motivate for their mission to Africa with the Christian gospel. Psalm 68:31 (*Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hand*) was used by Garvey to give divine affirmation of the strategic role that Ethiopia would play in African redemption and liberation (Erskine 2007:119–120). In this nexus of integrating scripture with land (*Ethiopia-Africa*) justice and liberation embodied in the person and works of (*Rastafari-Haile Selassie*), a group of men who lived ‘up in the hills’ on the margins of colonial Jamaican society began a radical religio-political movement of fashioning an African (*black*) liberation theology around African identity and land. The community-based model of theologising (*reasoning*) recognised the Bible as central to the Rastafari faith to which they engage through their black experience of history. Their method of reasoning shaped their theological reflections. This methodology is usually associated with meditation that is geared at spiritually equipping the Rastafari to ‘overstand’⁸ in order to maintain focus and to sustain and strengthen connectivity with other Rastafari and the Creator through worship (Afari 2007).

The African theology of Rastafari that evolved in the Jamaican context during the context of the great depression in the 1930s serves as a potent religio-political critique of the centrality of land justice especially for people of African descent. The theft of land and people that began in Africa during the colonial era still continues in the contemporary post-colonial, neo-liberal economic disorder by powerful and global

7. Ras Tafari (meaning Head Creator) is the term for Prince Tafari that was adopted in the identity formation of the Rastafarians in Jamaica.

8. Overstand means: To acquire deep intelligence.

conglomerate forces that use the instrument of politics and religion to accomplish their economic agenda. Rastafari's embracement of Ethiopia as the tangible expression for all of Africa is linked to a biblical reference about Ethiopia, the coronation of Haile Selassie as Emperor of Ethiopia and Garvey's teaching about the centrality of Ethiopia and Africa in the liberation of black people. Ethiopia and Africa are therefore used interchangeable in Rastafari language to embody the same phenomenon. Embracement of the land of Africa constitutes the first step in any Rastafari theological reflection. The context is much more than a physical location or geographical point on a map but rather an indispensable symbol of ideological and psychological identity formation that puts up resistance against the imperial forces that deny fullness of life to people of African descent. An example of this embedded connectivity with Ethiopia-Africa is best expressed in the spiritual narrative of the Rastafari group *The Abyssinians* through their song *Satta-Massagana* (1976)⁹ rendered with the use of drums that communicates sounds of a deep connectivity with their eternal African identity:

Satta-Massaganna

*There is a land, far far away
Where there's no night, there's only day
Look into the book of life, and you will see
That there's a land, far far away
That there's a land, far far away*

*The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords
Sit upon His throne and He rules us all
Look into the book of life, and you will see
That He rules us all
That He rules us all
SattaMassaganaAhamlack, Ullaghize
SattaMassaganaAhamlack, Ullaghize
Ullaghize, Ullaghize¹⁰*

The contemporary struggle for land justice in Rastafari African theology of liberation is consistently expressed through their songs. Garnet Silk in '*Ma, Ma, Africa*'¹¹ articulates what could be classified as a repatriation anthem for Rastafari in which he described the deeply embedded longing for a return to the motherland. Africa is described as a beloved mother separated from her children who have been taken away from home. He echoed the pain of separation and the hope for reunification:

*Don't you worry now, I won't be long
To see paradise, I'm coming soon
When I'm with you, I can't be alone
If not invaded you, you see me in June¹²*

9. The Abyssinians were poor Jamaicans with inadequate education, and the use of the Ethiopian language to communicate their deep connections with Ethiopia-Africa through 'Satta-massagana' which was not a linguistically correct use of the Amharic language. Their intention, however, was to communicate their desire 'to give thanks to God continually' for the land of Ethiopia and Africa, http://www.niceup.com/lyrics/satta_massagana (accessed October 19, 2015).

10. <http://www.lyricsnmusic.com/the-abyssinians/satta-massagana-lyrics/2504693> (accessed October 19, 2015).

11. <http://www.songlyrics.com/garnett-silk/mama-africa-lyrics/#qImKBw3uFmhuY6gl.99> (accessed October 15, 2015).

12. <http://www.songlyrics.com/garnett-silk/mama-africa-lyrics/#qImKBw3uFmhuY6gl.99> (accessed October 15, 2015).

Central to this Rastafari longing for African repatriation is the issue of identity restoration that has been ruptured by global political and economic hegemonic forces that Garnet Silk sought to overcome with his closing narrative *Oh, Mama Africa you make me know what life is worth*.¹³

However, it is Chronixx's anti-imperial and anti-colonial narrative that currently serves as the contemporary signpost of Rastafari's struggle for land justice. Chronixx's song embraced the central tenet of the teachings of Marcus Garvey who argued that the Africans, who were stolen from their African homeland and commoditised through enslavement by Europeans, have the right to be returned home (repatriation) to reclaim and develop their lands that were stolen. His discourse was not restricted to the African contexts. However, he used the African experience and worldview to argue for a wider global movement for justice for people whose land has been captured and stolen.

Capture Land (Chronixx 2014)

*And I say dread and terrible pon dem
Good God of grace, well I have His mercy
And me say Old slave driver, time is catching up on you
Old slave driver I know your sins dem a haunt you*

*Carry we go home, carry we go home
And bring we gone a East cause man a Rasta man
And Rasta nuh live pon no capture land
Carry we go home
A me settle and seizeCaw man a Rasta man
And Rasta nuh live pon no capture land*

*Lord, America a capture land
Di whole a Jamaica a capture land
A long time dem wah trick the Rasta man
Like dem nuh know say man a real African
Yuh tink me nuh memba King Ferdinand
And teifing Columbus have a Golden plan
Dem make a wrong turn and end up in the Caribbean
One rass genocide kill nuff Indian
Lord Fi turn paradise in a plantation
And bring cross one ship load a African
Now here comes the tiefing Queen from England
No she Cromwell and envy mother
Century pon top a century full a sufferation
And after four hundred year mi say no reparation
And now dem kill we wid taxation
But a beg you please take me to the motherland*

*Carry we go home, Carry we go home
And bring we gone a East cause man a Rasta man
And Rasta nuh live pon no capture land
Carry we go home
A me settle and seizeCaw man a Rasta man
And Rasta nuh live pon no capture land*

13. <http://www.songlyrics.com/garnett-silk/mama-africa-lyrics/#qImKBw3uFmhuY6gl.99> (accessed October 15, 2015).

Watch dem pon top a di hill
 A look inna dem plate how it proper and it fill
 Because down town have shocka fi kill
 Dem tell the tourist say fi stop a Negril
 So come mek we start a new chapter
 We nah stay pon di land weh dem capture
 A me say Africa fi all true Rasta
 A say go tell di unscrupulous factors say
 So...Carry we go home, Carry we go home
 And bring we gone a East cause man a Rasta man
 And Rasta nuh live pon no capture land
 Carry we go home

A me settle and seize Caw man a Rasta man
 And Rasta nuh live pon no capture land

Cherry Garden a capture land
 Me tell you Shortwood a capture land
 Los Angeles dat a capture land
 And New York city dat a capture land
 Ease some a di place weh you wah go live sweet
 A teifing land there's no title fi it
 And some a these place weh you wah go live nice
 A tief dem tief it in the name of Christ
 Spanish Town dat a capture land
 The whole a Kingston dat a capture land
 Remember Portland dat a capture land
 And all down a Trinidad dat a Capture land
 Barbados dat a capture land
 Tell dem Bermuda dat a Capture land
 And tell Columbia dat a Capture land
 All round a Cuba dat a Capture land¹⁴

Chronixx utilised his Rastafari hermeneutics to deconstruct and later reconstruct the historical error that was perpetrated by western ideological mis-education that has been used to cover up the great land theft of oppressed people. He even accused the Christian Church and its religion of playing an important role in that process of robbery. His language usage expressed bitter gibe and sarcasm against the colonial and imperial forces and their project of land theft in the Americas. His reconstructive narrative constitutes an expose of this deception that communicates a deep, sharp and cutting critique of history as taught by the establishment. He began by juxtaposing divine judgement with grace to identify that the right time (kairos) has come for the heirs of the *Old slave driver* to account for their evil atrocities to the Africans.

The recurring chorus line repetitively hammers home the continuous call of some Africans in the Diaspora for 'repatriation', a return to the motherland of Africa as the only solution that can address their dislocation and alienation in the capture lands of the Americas. Therefore, Chronixx issued an urgent call for action: *Carry we go home, carry we go home* (because...) *Rasta man...nuh live pon no capture land*.¹⁵ His use

14. <http://www.dancehallreggaeworld.com/chronixx-capture-land-lyrics.html#ixzz3p0c44njp> (accessed October 10, 2015).

15. *ibid.*

of the phrase '*capture land*' serves as a reminder of the fate that many vulnerable indigenous people around the world experienced with the loss of their land to imperial forces that turned their '*paradise into a plantation*' that resulted in their enslavement and for some, *genocide*. Chronixx's re-reading of classical European history of the Americas based upon his Rastafari embedded suspicion and distrust of history written from the perspectives of the colonisers. Therefore, in Chronixx's rewriting of history Columbus was no discoverer of any land or people. The USA and Jamaica are lands captured from the real owners who were sacrificed through the genocidal actions of plans which received royal approval. European nations built the wealth on genocide and enslavement using Africans to replace the Indians as labourers whose population almost became extinct in the Caribbean that Chronixx identified as the basis for seeking reparation from the British government that authorised the oppression of Africans for many centuries. This oppression against Africans has mutated down through the centuries since they were enslaved. According to Chronixx, the modern form of colonialism continues in the global neo-liberal economic order system that exploits the economies of developing nations.

Chronixx then switched focus to the Jamaican middle and upper classes that use their economic power to displace the poor from their land. Within the metropolis of Kingston, the poor would traditionally live up in the hills surrounding the city, engaging in subsistence farming whilst overlooking the people living in the plains. However, the wealthy Jamaicans have bought their lands and transformed the hills into exclusive zones with gated communities with *more than enough* symbolised in having that having a *plate* that is *proper and it fill*. This is contrasted with the poor that live on the margins within the ghettos of the inner city where life-denying violence reigns, *because down town have shocka fi kill*. Any hope to initiate economic change and development of their inner city economy by including them in the profitable tourist industry that is controlled by the wealthy business class fails because of their insatiable greed to keep the tourism profits for themselves alone.

No to business as usual

Chronixx has argued that because the system does not want to change, the Rastafari will not waste his energy seeking justice from the unjust system. Instead, he argues that it is high time for Africans in the Diaspora to engage in *starting a new chapter* because it is not possible to fully flourish on lands that have been unjustly captured by *unscrupulous factors* from the poor. A radical alternative of repatriation to Africa is therefore argued by Chronixx as a moral, ethical, spiritual, economic and psychological necessity because *Rasta nuh live pon no capture land*. This repatriation to Africa must be first achieved through a spiritual and political 'conscientised and decolonised mind' that is not enslaved by western anti-African values and secondly through political action of returning to the Land of their Ancestors – Africa.

A tief dem tief it in the name of Christ

The closing lines of his narrative list some of the areas in Jamaica such as Cherry Gardens, Shortwood, Spanish Town, Kingston and Portland; within the Caribbean region he identified Barbados, Trinidad and Bermuda; in Latin America he identified Columbia and in the USA, Los Angeles and New York all of which are deemed to be captured lands that have lost their moral compass in being home for the Rasta man! All of these areas that appear to be randomly singled out by Chronixx represent those places that represent *some of these place weh you wah go live nice, a tief dem tief it in the name of Christ*. They constitute areas where lands were stolen with religious legitimisation. This phenomenon of *stealing land in the name of Christ* has resulted in nations of the South, like Jamaica, built on economic inequality that feeds the growth of poverty among the masses and increasing wealth among the privileged minority social class.

Conclusion

Inherent in Rastafari religio-political discourse on land is an inherent contradiction with their selective and uncritical use of the Scriptures. Their literature is not short in critiquing the 'Babylon System' (Cooper 1993:121)¹⁶ that is expressed through the social, religious and economic systems of Euro-American imperialism. The role of the missionary Christian church and its use of the Bible as a partner in the colonial project is consistently critiqued by Rastafari. However, its critique on the role being played by the Euro-American imperialism system in the Israeli or Palestine land conflict is sadly missing. It could be argued that Rastafari theological reflections have also become psychological enslavement to a bias conservative reading of the Hebrew Scriptures like other conservative and fundamentalist Christian churches that facilitate an uncritical solidarity with the Israeli state in its role in the misappropriation of Palestinian lands since 1948. One would have thought that the global struggle waged by Palestinians for land justice would feature strongly in Rastafari's narrative discourse on land rights. However, apart from the advocacy narrative of the Rastafari rebel Peter Tosh¹⁷ who argued for the land justice for the displaced Palestinians, the dominant Rastafari theological construct through its use of the Hebrew Scriptures has failed to seriously engage Israel's unjust and illegal acquisition of Palestinian lands. This inherent contradiction in its discourse has therefore called into question its consistency in the global struggle for land justice if it continues in not addressing the Jewish/Palestinian conflict based upon land grab supported by religion?

16. According to Cooper, Babylon symbolises the *oppressive State, the formal social and political institution of Anglo/American imperialism*.

17. According to John Masouri from 'as early as 1979 he (Tosh) was refusing to perform in Israel because of his support for a Palestinian homeland'. In a concert that he appeared alongside Bruce Springsteen at Madison Square Garden, it is reported that 'He walked on stage smoking his ganja spliff and wearing Palestinian dress – it was Jewish New Year and he was in New York'. <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/move-over-bob-marley-peter-tosh-is-finally-getting-the-recognition-he-deserves-8914028.html> (accessed October 10, 2015).

This global phenomenon of land injustice embodied in the religio-political discourse of Rastafari points to the task of black theology to intentionally interrogate the interplay between the Bible, black people's identity and faith formation with their disinheritance from the land. Land constitutes an indispensable resource in creating and recreating the ethnic identity and culture of African people. Within the context of southern Africa, the issue of land is a very contentious subject that carries deep emotions concerning the political and economic issues relating to settler-colonial and racial differences (Moyo 2000:7). The Zimbabwe experience since 1980 has provided important lessons to the region how land redistribution must it must not be done. The action of the South African government since 1994 to bring about land distribution to the black majority has been very slow and limited because of their fear of the economic backlash from the powerful white minority that own majority of the land. Without land people become highly susceptible to be economically enslaved because it is through land holding that people create access to power, wealth and meaning.

The Jamaican experience of Rastafari religio-political discourse reflections advocates that only through radical political re-conscientisation among the poor will the issue of land justice become an urgent agenda for action.

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Competing interests

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