



October 15, 2022 SOSACRU—**PRESS STATEMENT**

The recently announced plans by the Woolf Group Limited to develop Bob Marley Beach in Bull Bay as an exclusive beach front hotel is a proposed act of terrorism on the cultural legacy, history, and contemporary ethos of the Ras Tafari Movement! Their proposal and the current government's seeming collaboration is especially troubling because Jamaica was chosen by I-n-I African Ancestors as the location where the spiritual and physical manifestation of the Ras Tafari Movement was birthed in the Western Hemisphere. Ras Tafari then, made Jamaica and the Caribbean region a Cultural Superpower in the world!

Over the past two years, the School of the Sacrament, Rastafari University (SOSACRU) emerged and have been engaged in disseminating educational programs on topics of critical interest to the Rastafari community. Our topics have included the movement's longstanding interest in reparatory justice and restitution and preservation of our Ethiopia-African heritage, both internationally and locally.

The thoughtless and aggressive assault on the cultural and spiritual relevance of the Bob Marley Beach, among other issues of injustices against the Ras Tafari community and historic locales are of urgent concern. Some members of both the local and International Ras Tafari communities have already raised concern over these plans as a proposal to privatize yet another Jamaican beach and in the process to evict various residents, including a handful of Rastafari families. The primary local pushback on this to date has been that this would erase the site where Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer once communed with the members of a longstanding Rastafari community. To be sure, it is both of those things; but it is much more. As with our Community's concerns over the fate of Pinnacle, the proposed development of Bob Marley Beach represents a dishonoring of the Rastafari heritage and an erasure of I-n-I deep history.

Since most outside the Rastafari community are likely unaware of the site's historical significance, a few facts are herein necessary to highlight:

- What is today known as Bob Marley Beach was once the *de facto* headquarters of the Emperor Haile Selassie I Theocracy Government (today the Divine Order of the Nyahbinghi Theocracy Reign) during the 1970s and early 1980s.
- It was at this encampment that the House developed its ritual polity of establishing island-wide Nyahbinghi celebrations that once circulated from parish to parish.
- The first Rastafari residents came there in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s and early 80s, the beach camp—sometimes known as “Lion Bay”—was a regular location for Nyahbinghi Assemblies.
- During the early 1970s, the first High Priest of the Nyahbinghi Order, Bongo Porru (aka Ras Aubrey Duhaney) took up residence there along with other Elders who had suffered dislocation following the destruction of Rasta encampments along Foreshore Road and in Back 'o Wall and Ackee Walk by the Bustamante government.
- Along with Bongo Porru, residents included Iconic Ras Tafari elders including, Mama Bubbles and Bongo Shephan and their family, Sister Carmin and Ras Vince and their family, Bongo



- Benji and his family, Bongo Spence and Mama Beryl and their family, Bongo Quallo, Bongo Hill, Bongo Gabby, Sister Nora, Bongo Macky and his family and many others—all former residents of the legendary Rastafari camps and yards once located in West Kingston.
- Not only did the beach camp have organic ties to an earlier incarnation of the movement in the camps and yards of Kingston, it became the site for organizing the tradition of island-wide Nyahbinghi gatherings that followed after the state visit of Emperor Haile Selassie I in 1966. Nyahbinghi reasonings were held on the first and third Sunday of every month—each month providing for the planning and scheduling of ‘binghi’ celebrations during the year.
 - Notable figures such as Ras Boanerges, Ras Derminite, Ma- and Pa-Ashanti, Bongo Rocky and Mama Baby-I, Ras Daniel, Bongo Time, Bongo Kali, Bongo Smitty, Bongo Thomas, Ras Mortimo Planno, Ras Sam Brown, Ras Cudjoe Brown, Bongo Tawney, Sister Merriam, Sister Ina, Sister Dauphney, Sister Vick and many others were all regular visitors at these ‘first light’ reasonings. They and others were present there in during the celebration of the Earthstrong of Emperor Haile Selassie I in July 1975 when the Nyahbinghi Order was formally established as the Divine Order of the Nyahbinghi Theocracy Government (today, Theocracy Reign). Simply put, Bob Marley Beach holds the status of a Rastafari heritage site.

The Board Members of SOSACRU stand ready along with other Rastafari organizations, to engage authorities in deliberations that will assist us in preventing dishonor to the Rastafari heritage. It is a matter of profound irony that our intervention comes amidst the celebration of National Heroes Week when the nation is poised to confer its *Order of Distinction* upon the Honorable Leonard Perceval Howell as the founder of Rastafari philosophy. We are reminded that the heritage of Pinnacle remains unsecured as of this date and I-n-I remain resolute to prevent (through this and a national dialogue) another Rastafari heritage site from being sacrificed through ignorance, negligence or for Special Interest economic gains.

I-n-I will continue the work of documenting and flagging for preservation other Rastafari heritage sites across Jamaica.

SOSACRU

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