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BILL MOYERS: For Americans who know of the island, Jamaica seems to be one of those sandy, sunlit playpens arranged neatly in the Caribbean for the pleasure of tourists. But there is another Jamaica. Most visitors never see it or know it exists. They are not likely to stop here on Spanish Town Road to get acquainted with it.

(MUSIC, SINGING)

But this other Jamaica is beginning to assert itself. An island that endured one of the longest unbroken periods of colonial rule in the modern world is trying now to write its own history.

And therein lies a tale, not only for the textbooks but for the human spirit as well.

(MUSIC)

Why Jamaica? It's only a modest-size island. Two million people, half of them under eighteen years of age, living on four thousand square miles. It is rich in bauxite, sugar cane and white beaches. But other places have these. If the island were to disappear, as part of it did in an earthquake two centuries ago, there would scarcely be a ripple on the surface of the world's economy.

But Jamaica is significant, because what's happening here represents the undoing of the colonial past, something that is occurring everywhere in the world where European and American expansion created plantation economies from the labor of colored races.

We in the industrial world will be dealing with this assertion of will and self-esteem for the rest of this century, not without some pain. Jamaica is a good place to try and understand the phenomenon. This island and the whole Caribbean reflect very clearly the forces of a modern revolution, a revolution involving the law, land, labor and culture.

RONNIE THWAITES: At least one out of every four people has no job. At least one out of every four. There is probably a higher concentration, in fact there is a higher concentration among the youth.

MOYERS: Ronnie Thwaites runs the Legal Aid Society in Kingston. Educated at Cornell University and a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, he is working now as a lawyer to speed the legal reform in Jamaica which he believes is essential to bringing his country into the modern world.

WATES: The hardest time to get a job is between fifteen and, say twenty-three
and twenty-four. And as a result you find there are numbers, hundreds of young people who are walking around the city with nothing to do all day. They come out of school and that's the end of that. They may or may not know how to read and write. They probably have no skills.

MOYERS: Well, if they do have jobs what are their wages?

THWAITES: Figures in 1973, official figures, indicated that well over fifty per cent of those who worked in Jamaica earned ten dollars a week or less.

MOYERS: Are there particular legal problems because of the housing?

THWAITES: Well, the basic problem is not a legal one. The basic problem is that there is no--there is not enough housing for people. And as a result you find people living in that, in this shack across the street here. There is one yard right down here which we have a lot of clients from and there are 2,600 people living in it. It's just one huge corral where people just move, and nobody knows who is there at any given time.

Landlord and tenant law therefore becomes almost a matter of a joke. How can the classic English landlord and tenant law, which is what we have brought into Jamaica, really satisfy the needs and meet the requirements of people living in this sort of condition?

FIRST MAN: Three years ago we started off with two persons. Now we have about fifty-three people employed to the Kingston Legal Aid Clinic. We see about a hundred and fifty people every week.

We set out with three aims. One was to provide the best possible legal services for poor people, to make the law work for them. The second was to try in fact use the law to end some of the oppression that is visited upon the poor in Jamaica on a day-to-day basis. And the third was really to try and use the information that we got, the insights that we gained, to change the law, to bring pressure to have the law changed so as better to reflect the aspirations and values of the people who are in the majority in Jamaica, the poor, the unemployed, the poor peasantry, and so on.

SECOND MAN: Just look at the--sampling of some of the things we face, thinking of important areas to do with the law. The Protection of Property Act. A very important piece of legislation in a situation where traditionally the defense of one's property has been put in a primary position sometimes, or at least on an equal status with the protection of person. And this is enacted in 1905. Things have changed in Jamaica since then. Do we need even to say that.

Another good example, the Offenses Against the Person Act. This is the one which young black Jamaicans find themselves before the courts. Granted, there have been revisions, but basically the law has not been overhauled since 1864. This was before the Morant Bay uprising. This was when there was an entirely different basis for government and the relationship between authority and those for whom authority was vested than there is now. Eighteen sixty-five, eighteen sixty-six, marked the development of Crown Colony, or the reinstallation of Crown Colony government in Jamaica, imposition for the first time it actually was, after the Morant Bay uprisings. And effectively you were at that time in a situation with the slaves being newly freed and the plantocracy, which was digging in its heels, both on the land in government, to keep the status quo the way it was. They're completely out of all consonance with any modern and independent notion of our people.

We have no other law to ask them to rely upon. We have no other law to work for them but these things. And therefore many times their needs and our expectations of being able to help them are completely cramped by the fences around our operations which are these laws. All of them grow out of a plantation economy.
All of them were passed by people who too, that style of life as their basic frame of reference.

THWAITES: Well, if you look at just where you are you will see that there's bound to be a tremendous amount of criminal activity, which grows out of the poverty and the sheer cramming together of human bodies, which we see around us.

You know, it's a myth to think that the poor have less serious or fewer legal problems than anybody else. They don't have problems of commercial law. They don't run companies. But every other manner of legal problem. Landlord and tenant, personal injuries, difficulties with contracts, particularly the sale of goods, family law problems, problems to do with inheritance, particularly in a situation as we have in Jamaica, Bill, where seven out of every ten people are illegitimate and where the law actively discriminates and disinherits people of illegitimate birth. These are just a few and the major ones of the legal problems, social problems which are legal problems.

This is not to say that if people lived differently to the way they do here that there will be no crime and no problems with inheritance. Don't misunderstand that. But the incidents and the kind of problems are inextricably related with the grinding poverty and the increasing poverty of people in these parts.

We are in the business of promoting observance of the rule of law at the Legal Aid Clinic. And therefore what we want to see is the law as it is and as it should be imposed with fairness and with justice for everybody, for all classes in the society. And that itself is a revolutionary context in Jamaica, in the context of Jamaican history.

WOMAN: About a half an hour after I hear the alarm coming up say that a policeman by the name of Jack say that Earl killed the man.

MAN: I can't understand this. The man was shot, right? The man died in the hospital?

WOMAN: No he died on the spot. He died on the spot.

MAN: Did they charge him for manslaughter or murder?

WOMAN: They charge him for murder first. When the trial, they send out the jury and the jury came out. Seven say he was not guilty and seven--and five say he was guilty. Well, the judge send them all back. When they came in they brought him in as manslaughter.

WOMAN: Not guilty of murder.

WOMAN: Not guilty of murder, manslaughter.

MAN: But that's wrong.

WOMAN: This is what everybody says.

WOMAN: The man died on the spot.

WOMAN: That is the thing that everybody says to me. So I must go and try my best to see if I can get him appeal, for the case is not fair.

WOMAN: It don't done fair, for they say it's murder and they bring him in as manslaughter.

MAN: The sentence, life?
WOMAN: Life imprisonment.

WOMAN: No. life sentence.

MAN: Life imprisonment, yes.

WOMAN: Life sentence.

MAN: Yes. And if he don't appeal and then therefore is fourteen days after the trial, it's going to be difficult for him to appeal after that, right? Fourteen days after...

MAN: Well he should.

MAN: If he has appealed already, then he can start...

WOMAN: We appealed on Monday.

MAN: On Monday.

WOMAN: Last week.

MAN: Last week, Monday?

WOMAN: Yes.

MAN: How old is he?

WOMAN: Nineteen.

WOMAN: Nineteen.

WOMAN: Tuesday he would have been nineteen.

THWAITES: Right now the poor man doesn't receive the same justice as the rich man. The justice you get is related to your economic standing in the society, which lawyer you can handle or you can retain, what court you find ourself in, what impression the court forms of you and your background and your stability, and everything else.

MOYERS: What is the role of the police in a society like this?

THWAITES: We want the police to act and enforce the law with discretion and with fairness for the poor. This doesn't happen. The police are in many instances used to keep people in check because this is the only way they know of controlling them. (SHOUTS OF DRILL COMMANDS).

MAN: The numbers of police that have been detailed to maintain, quotes, unquotes, "discipline," have no concept of what their function in a new Jamaica really is. They still behave and think out of a militaristic frame of mind. And as a result if you don't move into line they will slap you into line.

POLICE OFFICER: Now then, apart from the power handed down to the Commissioner, just like these men, you know also that, as a policeman, your duty is immense. And apart from the duties of the constable, you have certain powers. Anybody remembers any of the powers?

CONSTABLE: The power to search.
OFFICER: Yes, the power to search. The power to?

CONSTABLE: The power to prevent congestion.

OFFICER: Yes, the power to prevent congestion. Yes? That man over there?

CONSTABLE: The power to arrest without warrant.

OFFICER: The power to arrest without warrant. Anything else?

CONSTABLE: Power to arrest with warrant.

OFFICER: Power of arrest with warrant. Any other power of search? Yes?

CONSTABLE: The power to search persons and...

OFFICER: Yes, you have power to search persons...and?

CONSTABLE: Power to search premises.

OFFICER: Premises. Yes, premises. So you see that this law is a very working law, isn't it? It gives a policeman wide power. Of course here I must warn you, do not misuse your powers. Do not misuse your powers.

THWAITES: The police have a very difficult job. They are attempting to enforce criminal laws that are hundreds of years old. And we are trying to make sure that they do so with equality and justice.

Can I just draw your attention to here? This area is known as Riverton City. And right down the back there is a part that's called Times Square. These are people who have just come on this land. They have squatted, because they have nowhere else to go. And this is a swamp. When it rains there is, oh, anywhere up to a foot and a half of water, which everybody lives in. And people just come and build what they can with zinc and with board. And this is how they live.

Can you tell me how to bring the principles and protections of classic British Common law into this jungle? This is what it is our aim to do. But you will note a tinge of frustration in my voice.

The police we were talking about. The police come into an area like this. They are afraid because people are desperate. They are living on garbage. You see the children on the sidewalk, you see the trucks coming in. And as soon as they are challenged, if they are met with anything that they consider might be hostility or resistance, they shoot. And more often than not they shoot to kill. When this happens people come to the Legal Aid Clinic. People come when their relatives and friends are detained without being charged, or when they are brought before the courts on extremely flimsy evidence, and they want the protection of the clinic in this kind of situation.

CLINICIAN: Your boyfriend, has he ever been in jail anytime before?

WOMAN: Yeah. One time they shot him. Them shot him and I believe two shot him—in the leg. Them...them not carry him to the hospital...when...shot him...they not carry him to the hospital.

CLINICIAN: That time they charge him for anything?
WOMAN: No, he was sleeping.

CLINICIAN: When they shot him?

WOMAN: Yes.

CLINICIAN: All this time when he was shot, right? Did they charge him for anything...

WOMAN: No, they don't charge him.

CLINICIAN: Did the police...anything on him when they found him?

WOMAN: No, they don't found anything on him.

CLINICIAN: He was running out of here...

WOMAN: No, he was sleeping.

CLINICIAN: And...shot him...

WOMAN: Yes. And he jumped up and see the policemen outside.

MAN: Will you try and get in touch with the police station, find out whether he is charged or not? If he has been charged for murder, then what you should do, you know, is get to him, or if you can't get to him, you can go the...

WOMAN: I'm not...

MAN: You can go to the court, the...Supreme Court. And they will be able to give you some more information, as to how to get legal aid for him. If he has been charged for murder, we here will not be able to help him because the government provides legal aid. If he has not been charged for murder but with robbery, with other...the same thing applies, the government will give him legal aid. All right? If he has not been charged for any of these two things, then we will try and find out why is he detained, why is he not set free, because he has been detained now from the 20th of December, and now is the 29th, or it's the 29th,30th, of January. Over a month. And I would say it is no charge. So we'll try and, you know, certify this and see what we can do.

MOYERS: One of the first questions that comes to the mind of an outsider is, why in a country that has so many natural resources is there the kind of poverty we have seen today.

THWAITES: Because a lot of people have been ripping off the wealth for years and years. This country and the whole Caribbean, as you know from your own knowledge of history, has for generations and centuries served, in fact, to provide good returns and dividends for European and now North American capital investment. If you are exporting so much of your wealth it is not surprising that your society itself should find--should be very poor.

MOYERS: So what do you try to do?

THWAITES: The answer is a different politics and a different society. An answer is the development of a political movement of those who have no vested interest in keeping Jamaica the way it is.

The workers, the small peasants, those who are unemployed, in giving them the power over the society. But what is the objective need of these people? Need.
Their need is for food, for housing, for schools now, not ten years time, when some liberal people will get around to realizing that it's in their best interests to accord them these things. They need it as of rights, by means of their own power, now. And anybody who has the interests, the real interests, of Jamaica at heart, anybody who is really interested in creating a stable and peaceful society, where violent crime and the reaction, equally violent reactions to violent crime, characterize every day every newspaper, every working-class household almost. It's the only way we can do away with that kind of thing, the jungle of human existence, which in fact is here.

MOYERS: Another man trying to lead his country from its colonial past is the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Michael Manley.

In the last few days I have seen the disparities in Jamaica that few tourists see. And as I was riding along Spanish Town Road this morning I thought of something you once wrote. You said, "Man can transform, but not by tinkering." What kinds of programs are you going to pursue that go beyond tinkering?

PRIME MINISTER MANLEY: In terms of economic development, I would say that the two most fundamental things that we are already attempting are in our land-reform program and in our concept of worker participation in industry. In terms of land reform, we are developing a motto, well, we have developed a motto, which we are now going to try to spread throughout Jamaica as rapidly as we can, of developing cooperative funds, where we take over either old plantations, acquire them, or find idle land, and take a mixture of the young people of an area, of a rural area; we bring them into what we call a plan here called camps, put them under canvas, and begin an intensive process of instruction in agricultural method and in cooperative method, which we think is just as important, the cooperative technique.

Now, the second important element in this strategy, which really illustrates our attitude to ownership of existing industries, is I think best illustrated by what we have started to do in these same old sugar plantations. What we have done there is we are acquiring all of the foreign-owned land in that aspect of the sugar industry. And we are developing a system of worker cooperative, in which the old workers, who cut the cane and, you know, spread the fertilizer, and all the rest of it, are being organized as the cooperative shareholders and owners, as well as workers of the farm. This of course is a quite radical experimentation. But we are very pleased with the result, because what we are doing is to build a huge group that have a stake in the industry, that are themselves the owners and share in the profits, that learn the whole business of industrial democracy.

MOYERS: The cooperatives in Jamaica were only formed last December. It is too soon to assess their progress. But these sugar workers are enthusiastic about their chances. They have a model of success on another Caribbean island a thousand miles away.

This is Dominica, still a dependency of Great Britain. Two years ago a private company, the Commonwealth Development Corporation, CDC, tried to lay off fifty of the hundred and fifty people who worked on the Castle Bruce Estate. The estate manager, Atherton Martin, refused to fire them. When the company fired Martin, the workers all went out on strike.

The strike lasted two years as the workers tried, against opposition from unions, business and the government, to establish their own cooperatives. Finally a year ago they succeeded.

CDC sold the land to the government, and the government leased it to the Castle Bruce Cooperative, to the workers.

Atherton Martin is the man who started it all.

ATHERTON MARTIN: The situation, or the set of circumstances, out of which Castle Bruce arose from 1972, the Castle Bruce Cooperative, that is, is a set of circumstances that really is very common, very prevalent over many parts of Dominica.
and the Caribbean. And that set of circumstances is best expressed in the planta-
tion or estate system of agriculture, which employs, or used to employ, large
numbers of people in an unskilled capacity, who would perform very mundane and, you
know, menial tasks within a structure that was very centrally controlled.

What this meant in fact was that all our agriculture, or a large part of it,
already was employing a large number of our people, but it employed them more as
units of labor or more as objects than as Dominican people who were within a situ-
tion really had a chance to determine how they were going to use land, whether in
fact they were going to grow food or whether in fact they were going to grow crops
for export or processing, these kinds of things.

All these decisions were, and to a large extent today still are, in the hands
of foreign people. If we are going to be able to use our natural resources, which
in Dominica are basically land—if we are going to find a way to use these resour-
ces that will generate what most people accept to be development—that is, an im-
provement of the people involved, in terms of their ability to exercise control
over their own lives, recreation, their work situation—if we are going to do that,
then some system, some structure, must be found or formed which will permit the
people who are involved in using the land, in putting the labor into the land,
will permit those same people to decide how it is they want to use that labor.
And not only that, but even more importantly, what they want to do with their
returns from their efforts.

The cooperative structure has its beginning and its end in the General Assem-
bly; that is where all major decisions, policy decisions, are taken.

MAN: We have been talking a lot about increasing our salary. But this can
only be done after a period when we are able to sell or produce enough to bring
enough income to the cooperative. At the moment it is not possible. We are hoping
that after the first financial year we will be in a better position to determine
whether we are able to pay ourselves an increment. Up till now we are not in a
position. And I think that this will not be done without the consent of the General
Meeting. It is the General Meeting who will decide whether in fact that we are
going to pay ourselves an increment.

MAN: An increment of pay, how would I say, is not one which the mem--real
membership cannot fight for at this present, because we have to put enough labor--
because we are not paying ourselves. And furthermore, we not ask for employment,
we ask for them to work. And we must work to allow them to exist to pay us. So
of course at that time someone may think that it would be right to ask for an
increment, but at this time, as I know, it is not right that we can ask for incre-
ment.

MARTIN: When we talk about creating a structure that permits and requires
participation in management we realize that we are challenging ourselves to do
something that is, in our situation at least, coming out of a plantation system--
in our situation very new for us. And it is one that is going to require us to
continue, you know, feeling our way, sort of, with this new level of management,
because most of us have not been accustomed to a situation where we were required
to do anything except carry out instructions. But here we are in a situation where
we are required to be aware of the fact that, look if we go into this potato field
instead of this banana field, what are the implications in terms of costing, what
are the implications in terms of the yield that we will get from the potatoes, as
versus the yield we will get from bananas, and so on.

MAN: This cooperative will build education--start with education. That's
what—the most important thing we are in need of is education. No matter how you
get it or not, the education I believe is the first step. And that is what the
cooperative start with. By working together, this is an education. By joining
hand to hand, is another education. By changing ideas, to each one another, is an
education. Things, well, you don't know at all, someone know it, he will tell you about it, is an education. And reading and writing, when we don't know nothing about it, we are education, and come and see to help us to do these type of things. So I believe all this is education to us, because in time of Sidisy, I would be shy, no matter if I were a big man, but I would shy to stand up in a crowd so and to address any public. But today, through the education which I get from the coop I can stand up in any group of people and address anybody, you see, address the public and all.

MARTIN: The bamboo piping system, to me it's a classic illustration of members understanding that cooperative management, as we see it, really depends on their own level of understanding and their own willingness to participate and accept responsibilities for making decisions which normally they would have shunted off onto an overseer or to a manager.

The pipe system was a problem. We have some orders placed for vegetables from the cooperative farm and we have felt that the area in Modes would be more suitable for vegetables, after having looked at the soil type, and so on.

But the major problem is that area is—it is at least fifty or sixty feet above the level of the stream that we have running there. So it would have meant expenditure into getting a pump to get the water up to the field, or expenditure in terms of piping to get the water from a source where you could have a normal gravity flow.

When we examined the cost of the piping it really stopped us, because to get water down to the field in sufficient quantities to make it worthwhile would mean at least three-inch diameter piping, which multiplies out to something over six thousand dollars, when all this was discussed. And we all agreed that this was too expensive to go into. But what should be done.

MAN: When we came here to walk around here we find to get water to grow vegetables it is very difficult. So we make a plan. And this plan I bring it down to the management committee. Although he really did not support it because, the general supervisor said, he don't see where we can bring down the water, I said, Okay, well, I'm the manager, give me a break. I'll take a chance to see. If I fail, well, it won't go through. But if I don't fail, well, we have a victory.

MARTIN: Well, I was away from the farm for a couple of weeks. When I came back I found a marvelous piping system which had been laid down totally on the initiative and the efforts of the people in that section, the members in that section. But the members recognized they had cavities in the ground, and they were spending in fact quite a bit of money, of their own money, carrying water from, you know, from fairly large distances, taking a long time to do it, and so on, when in fact they knew of ways, from their own peasant experience, which would let them bring water down. It ended up being about 2,670 feet of bamboo, which was laid down by people, where many of them can hardly read or write. Most of them wouldn't recognize an admiry level if they saw one or a plumb-bob if they saw one. And using nothing but their own basic skills which they had evolved over the years and their willingness to see the thing done, because they recognized the need for it to be done, and also the acceptance of the responsibility that if they didn't do it, there was no one else they could turn behind to do it, because they were ultimately responsible for the success of the coop.

MAN: So you could see how all this is education for us. By planning together, meeting together, discuss together, to go out and get bamboo and to go out and get the water up there and to bring it down here, you could see how it is an education to us to save us a lot of entries in the coop.

By walking by yourself alone, you walk in--already you walk in--at times you will get fed up, weary, because it is yourself alone. But by walking together, I talking to him, he talking to me, I talking to my sister and my sister is talking
to me, we are walking until--and we will never feel tired, and we will never feel weary, you see. So by this I feel working more and we're getting more work done. And the more cooperation...

MAN: Encouragement is coming only by uniting together, because where there is unity there is strength. But where there is division there is no strength at all.

MARTIN: The human development is a development in terms of our ability as people to organize, to decide, to work together, so that the services that would normally have been provided to us, the things that would normally have come to us as a result of somebody else's benevolence, come to us from our own efforts, give us a sense of internal fulfillment, which is totally absent from a situation where one is constantly at the mercy of the person who is employing you or the person who is providing the services for you.

We have been told that development is the maze of rules that you have, whether you have jet airport, whether you have hotels, whether you have tourists come to your country. In other words, we have been given some very superficial measurements of a concept called development. But what we see happening is that our situation, in terms of our ability to decide for ourselves, our ability to decide, for instance, to organize so that we can solve a local problem, that ability is still inhibited very strongly because the minute we start to organize we begin to threaten those who control. And the minute there are those who control and those who are controlled, then we are not developed.

So what we attempt to do when we say we want to develop ourselves is that basically attempt to establish that control over our lives which don't leave us prey to the promises of a politician that if we vote for him, for instance, he is going to give us a road. Because in fact we can organize to build that road. It is this kind of concrete expression of organized activity that we really conceptualize as representing development, rather than concepts of gross national product rising this year or dropping this year, and what not. In other words, unless the growth in income or the growth in whatever other criteria you want to use represents a concrete improvement in the material and psychological aspects of people's lives, well, then we don't have development.

Through a cooperative system, which we are attempting here in Castle Bruce, already we begin to see not only the material benefit, in terms of the security that we have over what we are doing—okay that we can determine our wage levels, we can determine our productivity levels, we can determine how to use these factors. Not only this. But in terms of the peace of mind and the security that we have about being finally approaching a level where we are the ones who are responsible for our own actions, and our own actions are responsible for what kind of community we generate.

MANLEY: Like all post-colonial societies, we have suffered terribly from what I like to describe as the dependency syndrome. Colonialism saps self-confidence. It leaves you feeling that you really aren't equal to the challenge of your environment, because this is your political experience.

And already one sees the beginnings of the assertion of self-confidence in Jamaica. People are beginning to accept self-reliance as a method of internal organization, and I am proud of the things that are now being achieved, not by government but by communities that are organizing their own basic schools. And we have something taking place in Jamaica that is really remarkable. And that is the reggae music that is emerging from our equivalent of the ghetto, where the dispossessed and the lost of this earth are beginning to articulate their misery, articulate their demand for change, to articulate their need for a new ordering of society.

(SINGING):
MANLEY: And I think this is a tremendous factor in the changes that are taking place in Jamaica. This is the people singing their own story of change and making clear to the world the direction they expect change to take. And it’s fascinating, you know if you look at that and see it alongside of the intellectual search for identity, which you see in the brilliant work of a man like Rex Nettleford, whose art as a dancer and as a choreographer is original; it’s an attempt to use dance as an expression of the search for national identity, the search for new art forms and means of self-expression.

MOYERS: The Jamaican National Dance Company is directed by Rex Nettleford, who is not only a choreographer and dancer but a professor of political thought at the University of the West Indies, an author and commentator, a social scientist and adviser to the Prime Minister.

(MUSIC, SINGING)

MOYERS: What’s the significance of that last dance you were working on last night?

REX NETTELFORD: Well, it is the beginning of a much bigger work which I—which I am planning, dealing with prisoners and their response to coercive force.

MOYERS: Is that a--is that a real problem in this society...

NETTELFORD: Well, in a way it is. We are--any young nation, exactly how we manipulate and exploit our coercion becomes very important to people. And many people of course have sung and spoken about the law and order commitment of the old colonial government. And are afraid that this will extend to our own--our own administration in independence.

MOYERS: What are you trying to say in the piece you are working on?

NETTELFORD: Well, you know, what you saw last night was really sort of expressing a kind of hope and a kind of faith in humanity. And in fact what I--what I--the sort of movement that one saw has come out of a ritual which we have here called Pacomanian. What I really was doing was to distill it, as we do generally in the work that we do, to distill the traditional sources and get something which is expressive and which is of its own.

And I find that the kind of music that I am using, which is the Jamaican reggae music, itself rooted in traditional sources, has all this agony underpinning all this sense of protest, all this even despair. But somewhere it comes through as a feeling of hope in a strong kind of way. And it’s an interesting contradiction which creates a kind of tension. And I am trying to get this into the overall dance and in the individual movements.

MOYERS: Agony, protest. Those are not Jamaican terms.

NETTELFORD: Well, let’s put it this way. We use them. And, although they may not be sort of permanently or continuously established in our psyche, we use them. And we have reason to use them. A people coming out of colonialism and out of an historical legacy of—an historical legacy of slavery, is bound to have some kind of agony, some kind of sense of anguish, and even some sort of despair, because the problems have been tremendous. And successive groups of decision-takers have not altogether been able to come to grips totally with them.

MOYERS: What is reggae?
NETTELFORD: For me it is the expression of what we in Jamaica call dread. And this is an interesting concept, dread—D-R-E-A-D, dread. And what I regard it as is contained conflict. You know, people have always been saying, since the nineteenth century, that Jamaica is on the edge of a volcano, and yet it hasn't quite erupted. And this is because there is this tremendous capacity to contain conflict. Just at breaking point we somehow find the kind of solution, maybe in the creative urge or the creative source of energy of reggae, in even institutionalizing some of that energy. And I think reggae captures that thing of contained conflict. As I said before, the tension, speaking as an artist now, that I find in this expression of anguish, anger, despair, but through it comes a sense of hope somehow.

MOYERS: I conclude from what you are saying that the end of colonialism, the legacy, the will that colonialism left, are still very powerful influences in Jamaica.

NETTELFORD: Inevitably. We have been independent with a capital "I" only since 1962. We are yet to be independent with what I call the common "i". That is, where we are in real total control of our resources. You know, slavery, which was abolished in 1838, created one kind of society, from which we had to be liberated. Yes, after 1838 everybody became free. But many of the aspects of a slave society, in terms of the relationship between master and servant, persisted with a vengeance with the intensification of colonialism, when Crown Colony government came to Jamaica and all our—all decisions having to do with the development of this country were really taken by people from elsewhere, Crown officials, and whatever. And then we fought that. From that we had to be liberated.

And that came up to, say 1938-1944, when we spoke about self-government, which culminated in independence in 1962. But all during this time the same kind of relationship and the same kind of syndrome of dependency persisted in the development, if you like, of the multi-national corporations and the worldwide economic system, where we had to depend on foreign markets, foreign price mechanisms, foreign technology, and so on.

And one of the greatest tasks that we have now is to envisionize the innovative spirit and, you know, work in the interest of ourselves rather than in the interest of somebody else.

MOYERS: What's the role of music and poetry in breaking the psychology of dependence?

NETTELFORD: Well, these are ready and accessible manifestations of the deeper movement of change from dependency to self-reliance. And, you know, take the thing of music, it is sound. We probably haven't got to borrow anybody else's sound, in a way. And that comes out. Dance movement. We haven't got to borrow anybody else's. We have the human body, and whatever. And although we may fertilize this with the experience and achievements of other people elsewhere, we can safely assume that there is the soil here and we'll use it.

So, in all, the artistic manifestations of culture can be nothing more than the expressions of what's going on, as well as a kind of pace-setter in pushing people into directions that we think we want to go.

MOYERS: What is going on?

NETTELFORD: All the conflict, all the contradictions of a people consciously struggling to make sense of the chaos attendant on a heritage that is rooted in slavery and colonialism and in post-war economic dependency. All our energies seem to be directed to breaking out of that kind of prison, which is the prison that every developing country now experiences.

(MUSIC, SINGING, DANCING)
MOYERS: So they meet. The despair of poverty among people long passed over and the dream that one day it will be different. They meet in a celebration of the human spirit, where a people breaks free from the crippling past. In protest, yes, but in affirmation of their own self-esteem. A celebration of conviction that they can and will find their own way into the future.

(MUSIC, SINGING UP AND OUT)

ANNOUNCER: For a transcript, please send one dollar to Bill Moyers' Journal, Box 345, New York, New York 10019.

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