



BRIDGE

REBIRTH



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ON THE COVER



(L-R) Yannick, Jada, Danielle, Tari, Kyah, and Tasaun counted among dozens of students from College Bound, Inc. who painted a mural on the second floor of the Perry School in Northwest as part of a community service project for the Dr. King Holiday. College Bound Inc, based in Perry School, helps local students prepare for college through tutoring, mentoring, and scholarship programs. For more information or to become a partner (mentor), visit collegebound.org/ Photo by Jeremy Mines

MISSION STATEMENT

The WI Bridge sets out to highlight contemporary issues through the experiences of youth and capture the progressive, entrepreneurial spirit of the Millennial generation other publications gloss over. Writers will take to streets and feature people, programs, initiatives, and movements that uniquely address prominent youth issues. This hard-hitting coverage will lay to rest misconceptions of Generation Y and bring all to an understanding of diverse youth experiences.

EDITOR'S LETTER

Nearly one month into the New Year and my excitement about what's to come hasn't faded, even as I slip into the monotony of the daily grind. In 2015, I became more patient in what's going to be a long fight for black self-determination. These days, I'm learning to embrace the behind-the-scenes work more and argue with apologists and internet trolls less often.

Indeed, this mindset has translated to WI Bridge.

As we approach the first anniversary of our launch, I'm eager to expand our presence in the D.C. metropolitan area and recruit more young journalists and columnists with a fresh perspective on the pressing issues of our time. Starting this month, readers can find copies of the Bridge at a slew of local gathering spaces and offices including Sankofa Video Books & Café, College Bound, Inc., Plymouth Congregational Church, and We Act Radio. As always, those interested in joining our paper and representing their community by emailing sam.collins.89@gmail.com with "WI Bridge" in the subject heading.

The writers in the latest edition, aptly named Rebirth, have taken on this responsibility, documenting history as their contemporaries see it while adding to their own bodies of work. In this issue, you get the black millennial take on President Barack H. Obama's final State of the Union address and overall legacy. You also learn how the late warrior-scholar Dr. Frances Cress Welsing inspired an entire generation of nation builders. Our profile of local STEM camp Cyberninjaz showcases our generation's entrepreneurial spirit. Finally, the WI Bridge profile of Reggae artist Jah Cure will make you embrace the sounds that propelled the music genre to an international audience.

May you read this issue in its entirety and become inspired to grow in all that you do. In 2016, WI Bridge will reach more young people and create a common understanding of our problems while celebrating our victories. We hope that you join us in this journey for not only throughout this year but many more to come.

Yours in the Struggle,
Sam P.K. Collins
Editor-In-Chief, WI Bridge



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MILLENNIALS WEIGH IN ON OBAMA'S FINAL SOTU ADDRESS



President Barack H. Obama delivered his last State of the Union address earlier this month./ Courtesy photo

By Brianna Rhodes

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For the last eight years, President Barack Obama has been the face of the United States. Time has flown since he first entered office and it's hard for some to believe that his State of the Union (SOTU) address before Congress on Jan. 12 would be his last.

In the weeks after the SOTU, many individuals have shared their reactions to a speech that focused on a hopeful future and outlined goals President Obama said he wanted to fulfill in his last year as head of state.

"I think [the president] made some very good, valid points that needed to be said but I feel like he focused too much on international relations and other accomplishments that he has achieved while in office," said Asia Ewell, a couple and family therapy graduate student at the University of Maryland College Park.

"I feel like he strayed away from talking about what really mattered to Americans," said Ewell. "Gun control is the [hottest] topic right now with all of these recent shootings and I feel like that's the number one thing I was waiting for."

During his historic 2008 presidential

campaign, Obama promised to be the change America needed after a controversial Bush presidency. At the start of his presidency, troops were engulfed in the Iraq War, Osama Bin Laden had been a fugitive for nearly a decade, and the nation had suffered through what has been called the Second Great Depression.

Since entering office, Obama expanded healthcare access through the Affordable Care Act, ended the conflict in Iraq, furthered LGBT rights and expanded hate crime protections, tweaked the federal student loan program, and advocated heavily for gun control. However, there has been some controversy. Some people said he didn't address racial and ethnic divisions, criticizing his record on immigration reform and what they described as an inability to understand the perspective of marginalized groups in the U.S.

After reflecting on his eight-year tenure, most Millennials are still up in the air about whether President Obama kept his promise to the American people about what he planned to change. There's debate about what he has done in office, especially as it relates to black people.

"I think in the beginning [President Obama's] platform was sort of built on that desire to serve African Americans, but when it came down to actual legislation it wasn't targeted toward that

group," said Shannon Jeffries, an UMD College Park graduate student receiving her master's in school counseling.

"My brother's keeper is a good initiative," said Jeffries. "I think that identifying [the plight of] African-American males as one of our biggest civil rights issues of this century is definitely a big deal, but when you're afraid to say 'Black Lives Matter' on television, I really don't know if you're willing to go [great] lengths."

During his SOTU address, President Obama discussed many issues that are relevant today and revealed what he would like to see change in the years after he leaves the White House. He focused heavily on international issues, touching on the strength of America and how the country has not been weakened while people may otherwise think so.

President Obama also gave his thoughts on the course of action that some presidential candidates for the upcoming election would take against terrorism. He also assigned Vice President Joe Biden to be in charge of the push to fight against cancer.

He talked about the broken immigration system, protection of gun violence, equal pay, equal work, raising minimum wage, and giving everyone a fair shot and security in the new economy as well. But, some say he stumbled on issues

regarding race and police brutality.

"When he mentions an issue with black people, people think that he's being a race baiter. That alone lets us know that there is still racism and the acknowledgement of race in this country," said Jeffries.

"Just that fact that he didn't even have the audacity to say the word 'black' on television. I think that he definitely should have said more," Jeffries continued. "We also need to stop looking for a Messiah. We have to stop looking for a savior because, it's simply not going to be there. We just have to advocate for ourselves and stop waiting for another person to do so and give us a voice."

Towards the end of his speech, President Obama acknowledged his regrets as commander in chief, alluding to disenchanted young people who felt that their voices wouldn't be heard in a system that favors the rich and powerful.

"I think it was really big of him and how he said there was a lot of things that he did not get a chance to do in his eight-year presidency he did want to correct," Ewell said. "It's just the fact that a lot of presidents don't ever say stuff like that and how they regret not making decisions or not doing something during their presidency. I just felt like that was very humbling and very big of him to say that especially looking at it retrospectively."

WELSING REMEMBERED AS SCHOLAR

By **Sam P.K. Collins**

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In the years leading up to her death, scholar-warrior Dr. Frances Cress Welsing, with the help of friends and colleagues, fought tooth and nail against the very forces she described in her 1991 book *The Isis Papers: The Keys to the Colors*.

That battle, however, would prove to be futile.

Welsing's confidants say exploitative lawyers and timid power brokers in the D.C. Zoning Commission foiled her attempts to stop what has been described as the Jewish Primary Day School's encroachment on her property. For years, high noise levels emanating from the private school's playground rattled the 80-year-old psychiatrist, possibly causing the stroke that landed her in MedStar Washington Hospital Center on New Year's Eve.

The news of Welsing's Jan. 2 death shocked many who recounted seeing a clear-thinking, vibrant and mobile elder during public appearances locally and across the country months earlier. Such a healthy disposition, even in the scholar's last moments, didn't surprise Januwa Moja, a nationally renowned artist and Welsing's close friend of 40 years who recalled often seeing her face light up during discussions about racism. "Dr. Welsing was for us as a people 24/7. Her first priority was her patients, then the Welsing Institute," Moja told AllEyesOnDC, referring to the three-hour long sessions Welsing held in Howard University's Blackburn Center in Northwest on the second Thursday of each month between September and May of the academic year.

"Once she prepared for her patients, she would prepare for the session on the second Thursday. She was speaking everywhere and always hopping on planes. During those times, she was traveling by herself. In her 80s, she kept it moving, working on our behalf and elevating our consciousness. She read almost everything that had to do with our people," Moja added.

Welsing, an alumna of Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio and Howard, rose in notoriety during the 1970s and 1980s after she defined racism as a



Dr. Frances Cress Welsing receives an award at the Black LUV Festival in 2008./ Photo by Elvert Barnes, Creative Commons, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/perspective/2934266592/in/photolist-5ou47F-5thTej-5td4Gc-5td4FV-5td4Gi-5td4FZ-5td4Ga-5tdqfV-5tdqfH-5tdqg4-5thTem-5tdqgg-5tdqfD>

WHO LOVED BLACK PEOPLE



Libation is poured for Dr. Frances Cress Welsing and others who have transitioned during Jan. 14th program at Howard University./ Photo by Sam P.K. Collins

global white supremacist system built out of a white minority's fear of genetic annihilation. She reached this conclusion after hearing Neely Fuller, author of United Independent Compensatory Code System Concept, mention such a perspective. That encounter inspired her to find out why white people have acted in this manner historically.

In *The Isis Papers*, Welsing postulated that people of color, especially those with darker shades of melanin, are targeted in nine major areas of activity including politics, law, entertainment, labor, sex, and war. Her premier work included a collection of essays penned over the course of more than 20 years. For many, Welsing's scholarship made sense of the mental health issues black people continued to endure one generation after Jim Crow. It also inspired Public Enemy's album *Fear of a Black Planet*, introducing her to legions of young people.

In the decades since she developed what's known as the Theory of Color Confrontation, Welsing has unflinchingly defended her position to white and black detractors alike, contending that

back people's failure to understand the totality of racism impedes progress and maintains the status quo. In 1973, she debated Dr. William Shockley, physicist and proponent of eugenics, debunking most of his points and pushing him into abject obscurity.

The Millennial generation became familiar with Welsing's work after her appearance in the *Hidden Colors* documentary series. In recent years, they counted among a significant number of people in the audience during her lectures across the country.

"She had this infectious energy and came ready to deliver this message about white supremacy and racism," Millennial singer, rapper, and songwriter Jeni Calhoun, told AllEyesOnDC. Last August, she met Welsing during a lecture at Fisk University in Nashville during which the warrior-scholar signed a copy of *The Isis Papers*.

"The first time I came across *The Isis Papers*, I wasn't ready for the knowledge," said Calhoun, an employee of Jazzy 88.1 WFSK, located on Fisk's campus. "Now that I've come back to

it, it has a different message because I have a higher level of consciousness. I love how Dr. Welsing always broke down stuff and showed us how racism affects us on all fronts. I see all of the propaganda and things they're doing to keep us enslaved in this system."

After Welsing succumbed to complications from her stroke, students and fans took to social media to mourn who they considered a legend and staunch advocate for black people. A multigenerational gathering of more than 200 community members took place at the Blackburn Center earlier this month in place of Welsing Institute. That evening, guests poured libations, told stories about the late Welsing, watched YouTube videos of her interviews, and purchased copies of *The Isis Papers*.

Two more events, a 40-day ascension ceremony and memorial service, are scheduled for February and March respectively. Despite minimal acknowledgment of Welsing's work by the mainstream establishment, her influence among those who consider themselves "conscious" remains strong, making a large turnout at future events a

strong possibility.

"If she was white, Dr. Welsing's passing would be on the front page of the *New York Times* and all over CNN," Dr. Gregory Carr, chair of Afro-American studies at Howard, told AllEyesOnDC. "The critique of whiteness has become so vogue but it's something she and Neely Fuller pioneered. With *The Cress Theory*, Dr. Welsing was attempting to answer the call for a social science paradigm to analyze racism. That's why she identifies as one of the great theoreticians of the 20th Century."

Carr, critical of how social media diminished young people's will to read and organize interpersonally, said that youth could best honor Welsing by eradicating the white supremacist system methodically, not only in times of tragedy. "Organizing is based on collective study and work. That's what Dr. Welsing often talked about," Carr said. "There was always a mix of talking and work but that's all it is now. What we have to do now is commit ourselves to real time organizing and building between generations."

Technology enthusiast and podcaster Big Baba Rob shared Carr's sentiments, telling AllEyesOnDC that he wants to honor Welsing's memory by acting in the manner she often encouraged her audience to exemplify: respectful of one another.

"Dr. Welsing wanted us to be smarter and act better as a people," said Big Baba Rob, 42. "She wanted us to be aware and fight. Her lectures and book analyze where we are as human beings. We have to educate ourselves. We're being dumbed down and things are setting us up for failure. That's why we must continue to fight."

This article originally appeared on AllEyesOnDC.com

CYBERNINJAZ EXPOSES YOUNGSTERS TO SCIENCE

By Dejah Greene

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For a long time, the D.C. metropolitan area had few, if any, technology programs that centered on creating a healthy learning environment for young black children, particularly girls. Last year, a group of young black entrepreneurs started on a path to fulfill that need.

Cyberninjaz is a black-owned summer camp that aims to help children and young adults mature into educated, disciplined individuals that utilize skills needed to work in the fast-paced digital age. This program holds nine-week sessions at St. Andrew's Episcopal School in Potomac, Maryland.

After a successful launch, Cyberninjaz is gearing up for another round of fun slated to kick off in just a matter of months. In their upcoming courses, campers will learn the basics of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) by building drones and robots. The Cyberninjaz program goes beyond that, exposing children to 2D game design, Java, video production, 3D animation utilizing Cinema 4D, web design, and comic and digital art.

"Young women have a lot to contribute to science and technology, especially within the gaming industry," said Piankhi Zimmerman, founder of Cyberninjaz. With the help of his business partner and Cyberninjaz vice president Clarence Alexander, University of the District of Columbia student Christopher



(L-R) Piankhi Zimmerman, Clarence Alexander, Jeffery Melvin, and Christopher D'Angelo lead a presentation for the 4th Annual Girls and STEM event in Baltimore last November. ./ Photo by Carrie Kelly

games are male oriented with female characters who have unrealistic physical characteristics.

Research also shows an underrepresentation of women and members of non-white groups in the technology field. At Google for instance, African Americans and Hispanics accounted for three percent of the staff in 2014. This low representation most likely stems from the historic denial of access to resources and opportunities that would level the playing field for marginalized people.

Members of the Cyberninjaz staff said

Alexander said he believes that if children in the area brush up on their math skills during the summer, their grades would improve during the school year. "We know the kids want to learn, the best part about teaching is teaching the ones who really want to learn," he said.

Once students complete their projects, they can present it to their parents and peers and showcase it on the official Cyberninjaz website. The feat allows often allows participants a chance to reflect on their work, improve their skills, and boost their self-esteem.

recess hour called "Ninja Fit Time," the camp counselors encourage the kids to run, exercise and play sports such as Ultimate Frisbee, soccer, and boxing. "A big thing about Cyberninjaz is that we strive to keep everyone healthy and fit with Ninja Fit Time. We want to emphasize the importance of staying active," Zimmerman said.

Another aspect of the program that makes it stand out from others in the D.C. metropolitan area is what Zimmerman describes as a the dedication to maintaining a positive and close relationship between the students, parents and camp counselors.

"Girls play video games just as much as guys, so why aren't they creating them? Why aren't they detailing the characters and creating story lines? We need to start correcting some of those things,"

D'Angelo, and businesses coordinator Jeffrey Melvin, Zimmerman keeps the program's curriculum up to date.

"Girls play video games just as much as guys, so why aren't they creating them? Why aren't they detailing the characters and creating story lines? We need to start correcting some of those things," said Zimmerman, an alumnus of American University in Tenleytown.

Even though women account for more than half of gamers, there has been criticism that the majority of video

they believe that teaching young girls how to create video games can empower them and pave the way for a new wave of products with a more female leads.

"Women have a lot to contribute to science and technology, especially within the gaming industry."

In response to the recent decrease in math test scores from students in the Washington metropolitan area, the Cyberninjaz family also offers math tutoring for subjects such as algebra and geometry.

Alexander recalled seeing this first hand, recounting instances when he only had to show a child how to complete a task once.

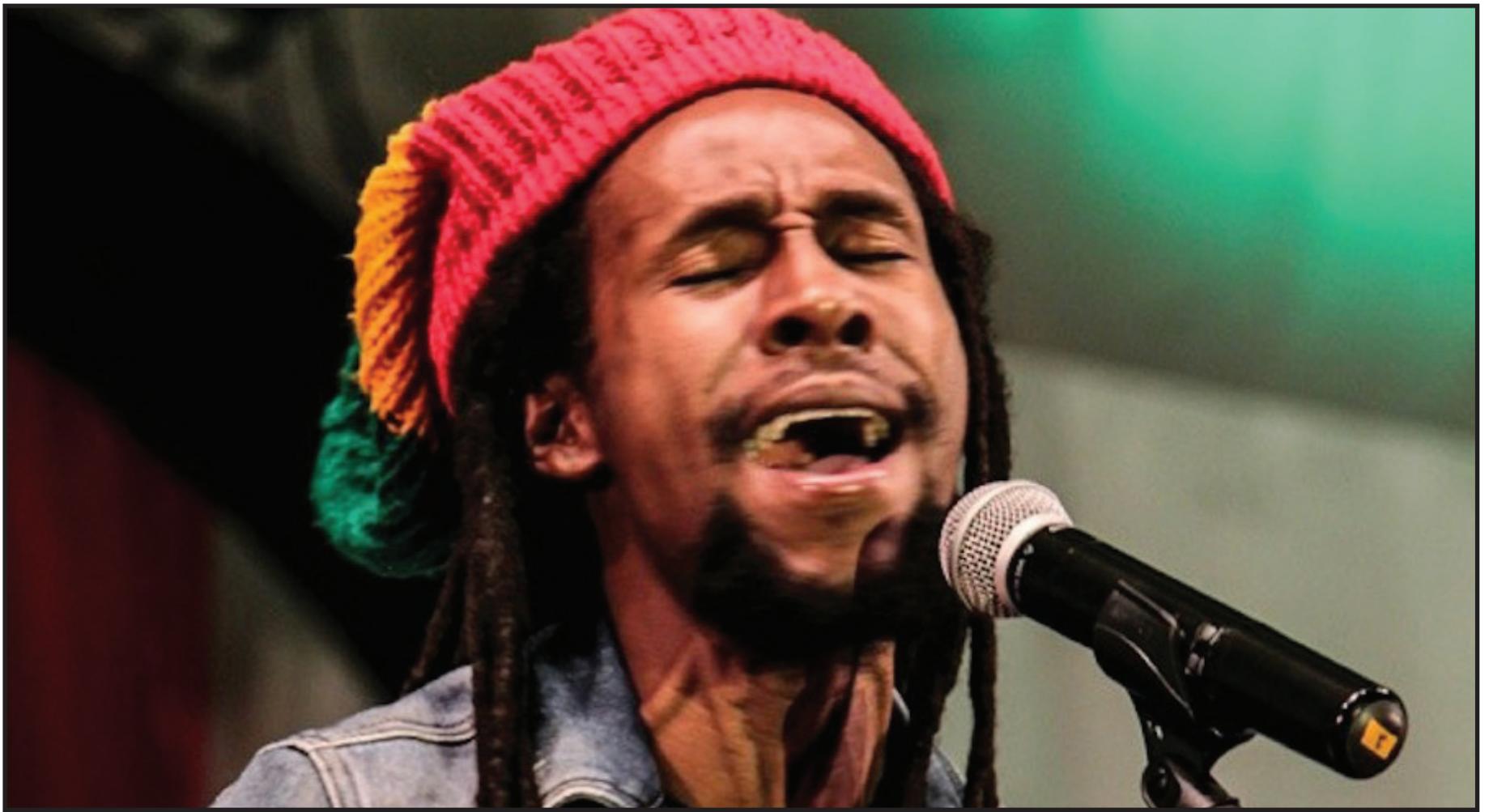
"After showing the kids the basics, we had one girl do really amazing 3D modeling of a sword from her favorite cartoon," he said. "Her work was extremely meticulous. It was great to see such refined art."

The Cyberninjaz summer camp also allows its participants to engage in physical activity. During the daily

Before Cyberninjaz, Zimmerman led his share of summer enrichment camps in the D.C. metropolitan region. He said he became aware of the disconnect between the camp counselors and the students, realizing that there needed to be a more positive and memorable environment for everyone involved.

"I wanted to open up this camp, because I wanted a place where parents and students didn't feel completely separated from the teachers," Zimmerman said. "The biggest thing we want to offer is exposure and exposure with actual take away from the new concepts they have learned."

THE CURE: AN ALBUM OF PROPHECY AND LOVE



Kingston-born Reggae artist Jah Cure released *The Cure* last year./ Reggaebeatmaker.com

By Adolf Alzuphar

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Siccatore Alcock, who's also known as Jah Cure, was arrested at the age of 19 and later convicted for rape, robbery and gun possession. During his 12-year prison sentence, he released his first musical work, titled *Free Jah's Cure The Album*. Nearly a decade later, he has remained true to conscious Reggae, even as many of his contemporaries turn to dancehall for potential riches and stardom.

His newest album *The Cure*, released last year by Jamaican music titan VP Records, still stands as prophecy that teaches us to maintain some sanity all the while moving our souls; wise words from a man who's served time. In terms of musical direction, it stands as classical work though it departs from its classical Reggae roots. For those of us living in the United States, it would be safe to assume that an album with this title would be an exploration of an artist's wealth and winning personality. Instead, Jah Cure shows us how to "find the light." It simply means loving your better half, praising Jah, keeping great

friends, abstaining from corruption, and delivering oneself from painful living. Though you're not rich or dating runway models, you'll be "cured."

Like his fellow Reggae artist Sizzla Kalonji, Jah Cure makes music one can easily fall into. Additionally, the cover art for *The Cure* raises the standard, showing a head shot of Jah Cure vibing to music with his eyes closed. All 13 songs speak about finding a path to sanity, whether through ganja, introspection a woman, or Jah.

In listening to these tracks, it's important to remember Jah Cure's life story. It puts everything he says into perspective. In "Set Me Free," Cure bluntly states that "you set me free." Given his time in prison, that's not a clam to take lightly. In "Other Half of Me," he tells a woman with whom he sips "tea by the fire" that "I can't live without you" and that "only love will remain when we get old". On "I surrender" he sings "[I]ook what I've been through" that "they don't want me to touch the sky", but that "I'm working over time". He then sings that "Jah is by my side" and it all makes sense. It is a profoundly spiritual song and the best on the album.

The Cure also includes an interpretation of John Legend's "All of Me" on the album, quite an unexpected move. He sings it better than the platinum-selling R&B crooner, giving it a feel that's more aligned with everyday living than the glamour of pop-soul. In "Corruption" and "No Friend of Mine," Jah Cure speaks out against corruption, which he calls "the greatest enemy." They are both wise, philosophical, songs.

In a sense, the circumstances of Jah Cure's life and the political climate in which he lived molded his perspective and message.

He was born in 1978 during a golden age of Jamaican politics during which Roots Reggae became a mythical, global sound. In that period, Jamaica was a hotbed of political conflict, priming artists to express their disdain through music. By the time Jah Cure started making music of his own, the political landscape changed. With globalization, Jamaica turned away from its leftist past, and with the growing conservatism in President Edward Seaga's administration came dancehall music, a brand of Reggae with lyrics much less about love, and

more about sexuality. Even so, certain musicians persevered with Reggae music, reinventing it into a much more technologically modern version of itself adhering to the traditional principles of love, chanting down barriers, and praising Jah. Jah Cure belongs to this group of new Reggae musicians.

"The cure is here." Jamaican society is full of evil, as are most societies today. Corruption, relationships not based on love, and the nonliving according to Jah's prescribed good is at the heart of the ever present "Babylon", the unsacred city. Jah Cure is singing to the corrupted. Like any commercial artist, he dresses up his music to appease the industry's tastes in great dress and great visuals. Cure does not dress ragged, Reggae, as for example Bob did and his stance against corruption is less believable, though it is very believable. It might be a new way of symbolizing Reggae. Jah Cure is a great torchbearer of the Reggae tradition that has dimmed due to dancehall's hegemony. It is a must listen for all of those who would like to live a life of both art and wholesomeness.



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