**Brief I-story of Rastafari community schooling projects in Barbados (1980’s to present)**

As the Rastafari community proceeds into this new dispensation in collaboration with our wider African family to address the issue of home schooling and possibly an Afrikan – centered learning institution, it would serve us well in moving forward to be aware of previous efforts of our community to achieve the same.

* Mid- 1980’s, the Community Club, which was a building (now demolished) situated on Bay St./ Brown’s Beach where there now exists a car-park and changing facilities, was the location for the children of some Rastafari families to meet especially on week-ends for a variety of classes and other out-door activities including swimming and first aid compliments of Ras Ally.
* 1998 On completion of the International Rastafari Conference and Trade Fair held at the then Sherbourne Conference Center in Two Mile Hill, the Barbados Rastafari Working Committee (renamed ICAR) converted a house in Sealy Hall, St. John, which had been used as accommodation for some of the visiting Rastafari ,into a school to which offered arts & craft classes, workshops, nature study/back-yard gardening etc. for youths up to about age twelve.
* 2000/1 Since it was not feasible to continue renting the property in St. John and because of the need for a more central location, similar Saturday schools were initiated at Ras Sipho/Sister Aziza’s residence in Fairfield, St. Michael

2001 Grazettes Community Center was the next location used for Saturday schooling and the children who were preparing for 11 plus exams were tutored by Rastafari who were at that time teachers in the secondary school system. The grounds at the center were also used for the youths to get training in football techniques thanks to their coach Ras Sipho who had also represented Barbados on its national team. The number of mainly Rastafari children at this Grazettes location reached beyond 70 on some occasions. The use of this community center was facilitated by ICAR (registered as a charity # 491- Charities Act of Barbados) and continued until another location for the schooling was attained in White Hill, St. Andrew at Sister Ireka’s residence.

2002 – 2008 During this period we should also mention that as the interest in the schooling of Rastafari youths declined, the community was still able to host summer school activities at the Nyahbinghi Tabernacle, College Land, St, John due to the collaboration of the brethren and sistren at Mt. Carmel and ICAR. Family day events and visits to places of interest on the island were included on the calendar.

In addition to our local initiatives, our affiliation to the Caribbean Rastafari Organisation(CRO) exposed I and I to reasoning around the region which among other topics focused on educational issues including the compilation of a Rastafari booklet that could be used by students preparing for CXC exams given that questions related to Rastafari livity/culture were regularly asked in the social studies classes.

The CRO, in its hosting of events from Guyana in the southern Caribbean to Tortola in the north, hosted workshops, panel discussions, nature trail walks and other activities which helped in empowering our Rastafari communities in many diverse skills as well subjects/ discussion topics thus enhancing our knowledge base for any future endeavours. It should be noted here that most of these gathering were open to adults as well as our younger generation and were not limited to Rastafari. In most of our organizing of such events, ICAR as well as CRO usually maintained a healthy working relationship with the government ministries inclusive of Education, Youth Affairs and Community Development.

ICAR welcomes the initiatives taken by the Afrikan Heritage Foundation to confront the present challenges with respect to the home schooling of our Rastafari children as well as the development of a relevant curriculum and the possibility of establishing an African oriented school. As stated in our list of objectives among others, to address discrimination, religious intolerance, youth and adult education, reparations (reparatory justice) and the general development of African Descendants at home and abroad, ICAR looks forward to this coming together of civil society organizations and individuals to enhance the development and future potential of our African communities with special attention to the socially marginalized and disadvantaged.

Jah guidance and blessings

Ras Iral Jabari (Carl Talma)

Chairman – ICAR/ Co-Chair – CRO

October 12, 2016