



1983

Rhythm and resistance: Maintaining the social connection

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Suggested citation:

Robertson, Clive (1983) Rhythm and resistance: Maintaining the social connection. Fuse Magazine, 7 (1&2). pp. 32-38. ISSN 0838-603X Available at <http://openresearch.ocadu.ca/id/eprint/1816/>

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RHYTHM AND RESISTANCE

maintaining the social connection

Ric Amis



(left to right) Devon Haughton, Lillian Allen, Clifton Joseph

Clive Robertson interviewed poets Lillian Allen, Devon Haughton and Clifton Joseph in March '83, just prior to their departure for England where they attended and performed at the Second Annual Black Radical and Third World Book Fair in Brixton.

FUSE: How did you come together, how long have you been working together, and where did you come from?

Clifton Joseph: I was familiar with Lillian's work more than anyone else, and I had been working with her for some time on various projects, not only literary but social, political and community oriented programs. She had been doing her stuff over the past decade, and we had been having discussions since the mid 70's on the function of art, what we think it should be, what we are trying to do, the environment we are functioning in, and so on. We had both been giv-

ing readings separately, and then we started to be on the same bill together. I had heard about Devon from several people, and then I saw him for the first time at York University, and from that time we all started to work together, with Krisantha,* and moved closer and closer together.

The idea to publish came to me because of Lillian's publication **Rhythm an' Hard Times**. I had never thought of it, I just read the stuff to people to get the work out, but after the success of Lillian's book I thought more seriously about it and that's how **Metropolitan Blues** came about. From there we started to think and talk about some of the other aspects of writing; the process, the marketing and production, how it relates to our political environment. We thought about how we can assist other people

*Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta is a fellow poet who works and performs with the group, living in Toronto and publishing with *Domestic Bliss*; he was out of the country at the time of the interview.

in their development too, and how to generate related activities in our community. We now all come under the rubric of *Domestic Bliss*.

Lillian Allen: I met Krisantha at his book launching. Himani Bannerji thought it was important that we meet and read together — she was an encouraging factor in both our writings for years. Then I heard about Devon, and hooked up with him, and we started reading together as a team, because we were doing and saying basically the same thing, from different perspectives. We do continue to do separate things too. I think that what pulled us together was the realization that we needed to organize this stuff. It was gaining in popularity, and we wanted to pull upon the strength of an organized collective to present an organized front. We are still thinking about it — publishing, how we can do more work, how we can make a living out of this and

encourage and involve other people.

Devon Haughton: I had been hearing about Lillian for a long time; the same guy who told Clifton about me also told me about Clifton, and so we started meeting — me, Clifton, Lillian and Krisantha, and a couple of months after my first reading the four of us were doing a show together.

LA: I would hear about Devon in the Spanshtown community of Toronto, in the barbershop and the stores because both Devon and I are from that town, both from large, fairly well known families.

CJ: Basically, all of us were doing our own work, and because of the environment, because of a general wave of poetic activity in Toronto, more and more people, even some of the older ones who had put their books up on the shelf, came back on to the scene. There was a renewed interest in poetry, especially in poetry as performance.

Poetry as performance

I have always thought that poetry needs to be taken out to the people; some of the ways that it is taught in highschool, some of the ways it is analysed by academics are too sterile, so the poetry stays on the counter, it stays in the library turning to dust, and who wants to turn into dust? I have always had an interest in taking it out to the people, wherever they may be. I have seen it as my responsibility to react to the situation and go wherever people are gathered together to espouse this form of activity to them — not just poetry dealing with our specific context, but any anti-establishment, anti-oppression poetry, a poetry of resistance. It was only natural that we should come together last summer. The activity peaked for us when we all got together, and then in the fall of '82 we started moving on from there.

FUSE: It always seems that when there is a new thrust in music, the poets that are associated with that music are brought up with that musical development. It happened on the West Coast, it happened in the 50's and 60's. Often poets who perform their work are influenced in this way. Do you think that this sort of a community is developing here?

LA: I never thought of it that way, but indeed, it might be a factor. I would say that in our poetry we are saying things that people don't generally associate with poetry or art. We are presenting it in an interesting way too, which has helped the popularity. And,

yes of course we are pulling on the musical influences. I agree, it is a factor.

CJ: There is heavy musicality to the poetry that we do. The popularity of reggae over the last number of years, and its international acceptance has laid the ground work for dub poetry to develop, as Linton Kwesi Johnson and others from Jamaica have developed it, from the music itself. There are always musical influences, because we grew up in an environment where music is very important on a day to day basis, so it was only natural that music should be a part of the poetry. In Toronto it's problematic because even the musical bands have a hard time getting their work recognised; on one level there is a lot of popularity, but on another they've come up against stone walls. In Toronto, bands like **Truth and Rights**, and **Gayap**, and before that, **Crack of Dawn** exposed people to music created by West Indians, so it was a little easier for us.

We have a lot of music in the poetry, plenty rhythm, plenty music, and we even refer to musicians in the works. I think one of the reasons for our popularity is that we are able to do two things: we are able to do a musical presentation in a poetic style, and a poetic presentation in a musical style. In this way we manage to get to some places where a musical band might not. The music has laid some of the ground work for us, but the poetry too is making ground, feeding back into the music.

LA: In terms of our work, I think that we all draw from our experiences, our collective and cultural experiences to enhance our message and our performance and the form that we are involved in. The music influence is inherent in the rhythm, but we have gone outside the traditional restrictions and boundaries to call upon our own social, cultural and historical resources, and it is interesting to people who have preconceptions about poetry, they like it.

FUSE: One thing I would like to ask you, since I have seen you a few times, is about the fact that a lot of musicians like to think that they go out of their way to make contact with their audience, and some of them are more successful than others. This seems to be very much a part of what you do; you are not only in very close contact with your audience, but you're informing them about what you do as you go along. I would like to ask you what is happening to you as a group, what are you trying to do, and do you think that you will be able to continue this as you



Lillian Allen

go along? How would you keep it going? What happens to a lot of musicians is that it gets more and more difficult as they get more and more popular, when the pressure is on them to do something different.

CJ: With us I don't think it will be difficult. I myself have always done this sort of thing, mostly not for money — at African Liberation Day ceremonies, political meetings, social benefits, variety shows and so on, just to keep it in people's minds. So, before I even considered publishing, before I considered going to the night clubs and talking to the press, I always had the conception that the work I do must relate to people. They must see it as being useful and having some connection to their hearts when they hear it. Now that there is more interest in the work, we've still kept that contact, and in the last couple of months we've done 4 or 5 benefits. If people are having a meeting and they want us to be there, on a political and

cultural level, then we will be there if we think it's worthwhile. We are action oriented, and because of that, we need to know that the people we associate with are also action oriented and grounded with the people. We are very accessible.

LA: The people who approach us are people who have heard of us and have obviously been impressed or influenced by our writing and performing.

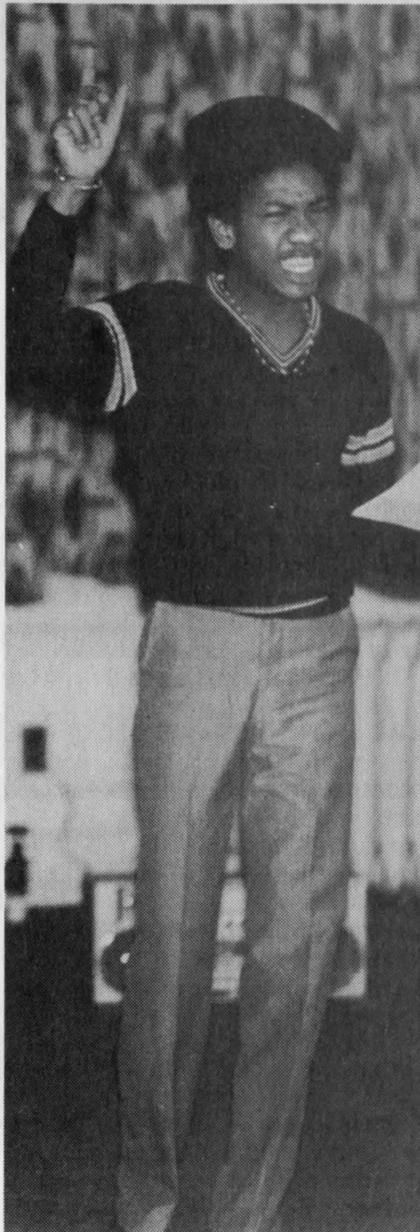
Self-determination

CJ: I think we have a very highly developed sense of history, and we've trained ourselves to notice what our activities relate to. I don't know if success would spoil us, I don't know what we would do if someone gave us a million dollars. I can understand how it happens to musicians who, when they become successful are promoted and get into the top ten, and find themselves taken out of their environment. But because we ourselves control some of the mechanisms, we manage ourselves, we promote ourselves, we market ourselves, it means that we are conscious of how we relate to people. If we break that connection with the people we will become another variation of academia. I don't think it will happen to us.

FUSE: Devon, how did you get involved in this work before you came to Canada?

DH: A long time ago, when I was in Jamaica I used to hear of Linton Kwesi Johnson. At the time I moved around with Oku Onuoru, who was then known as Orlando Wong, and Mikey Smith, and they used to do poetry down at the *Jamaica School of Drama*. If a concert was happening they would go and perform. As I got more exposure to dub poetry I wanted to do something myself; I thought that when I got back to Canada I would hit them with it. Little did I know that Lillian was here already doing just that.

CJ: You can see that Devon has some connection with the writers of dub poetry in Jamaica. In talking about dub poetry in Canada, you'd have to mention Devon Haughton, and you would definitely have to mention Lillian Allan, because they both have had connections with its roots in Jamaica, and have been involved in the earliest developments. It's a different manifestation here, because of the different environment, but they have been influenced by the same people who influenced Kwesi Johnson in England and the other dub poets in Jamaica. There are dub poets



Ric Amis

Devon Haughton

developing here too; Ishaka, for example, who plays with *le Dub Sac*.

FUSE: Lillian, at the writers forum, you were talking about the relationship between you as a writer and the other work that you do. Does that mean that you would always want to do other activities?

LA: In terms of some kind of community work and activism, yes, and I actually see my writing and performing as community work. As Clifton was saying, if we were to get rich and famous, we would still maintain a base in the community. In fact, I think a lot of our resources would go into initiating and developing activities like ours. As I see it, writing is part of what I do, but I do have a whole life out there, family, work, friends and lots of other interests, and I would never want to get into writing alone in a room, cut off from

this. I want to be connected to people and to a normal life. I am working all the time — I have a full time job — and I consider this to be a stage in my writing. I'm gathering experience and knowledge and understanding to write at some future point.

FUSE: But the job you do informs your writing?

LA: Yes, and I've always done these kinds of jobs. I do community legal work at present. Basically I'm a community development worker. I work in areas of the city where people have very little money and face a lot of obstacles.

CJ: The biggest reading I had was with Lillian in 1978 at a Riverdale Inter-cultural Council's event. We were both working with the Black Education Project, dealing with some of the problems facing the Black kids who were being streamed into technical, vocational schools, and being set up for work in factories. We were tutoring them, and organizing their parents to make demands on the school system. So when I write a poem like "Freedom Chant", where I'm saying "It is dumb to be asking for your freedom", I mean that it's no good asking, you have to fight for freedom. That particular poem came from my experiences working in community organizations — I'm taking the stance that you have to fight, and the fighting might take different forms at different times, but nowhere has there ever been change by someone just asking politely for it. You have to go outside the framework of the people who have been oppressing you and build your own framework, away from submission and exploitation.

Definitely the work that I have been doing has been community work. I too still do a full time job at a group home, where you are dealing with the kinds of conflicts that develop with migration — when West Indians come here and have to deal with the educational system, the racism inside the schools. We see all of these things.

LA: We feel the need to write about these things, to change the way that the social workers and social scientists have categorized us, and all oppressed people. We are rewriting history, we are redefining ourselves.

Correcting deceptions

CJ: When Devon does "Prostitution", about youth unemployment and prostitution, and when Lillian does "Rhythm and Hard Times" and when I do "Chuckie Prophecy" — we are all

describing situations we are familiar with. This is why we do as many readings as we do. There have been accusations that we have saturated the market and read too much, but we are only trying to correct the historical deceptions about us. We must see ourselves as people who have understanding, and a job to do, and we will take the poetry to the places it comes from.

People have been fed so many negative perceptions of themselves, that after a while they begin to believe in it. Perceptions of the Black race and tribalism, perceptions of the lack of African civilization, the idea that people come here and just go on welfare, etc. So we see ourselves as having some kind of responsibility in showing people their lives. We want to break out of the system of defining a problem by describing the parts only, and ignoring the roots and causes.

CJ: When Lillian reads "Belly Woman's Lament", it is something that people have experience of, because of the high incidence of teenage pregnancy where the men won't acknowledge their responsibility in conceiving the child. We always surprise people, because often they didn't know what to expect, but they find that they can see themselves in the poetry, it relates to them.

FUSE: When you read Lillian, there is a lot of information in the poetry and a lot of connections to be made. Do you assess the audience beforehand and decide how much to talk about the issues, how much to contextualize?

LA: Yes, we read the audience, we have to. Sometimes we do straight performance, in a night club for instance, where people are three-quarters intoxicated. But when we read at a benefit, where the audience is obviously supportive of us, they want to hear what we have to say. One of the reasons for our wanting to talk about our work so much, probably more than we should, is that we don't have interviews like this and we haven't had too much coverage in the media, so it's our only chance to talk about what we're doing. The work doesn't necessarily need any introduction, because the themes are quite universal, although from a unique perspective. The language might be a bit difficult for some people, but if you listen you will get most of it.

DH: Personally, I don't like giving introductions to the poems; people come to hear poetry, not anything else. You can say something brief, but don't take too long, just let them be in a receptive state, let them be surprised.

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LA: It's true that people come to hear the poetry and not the talk, and I think for the most part you should get your message across through the work itself.

CJ: There are times, however, when you have to put things into a framework in order to be understood. I did "Chant for Monk" in front of a group of 7 or 8 graders, and halfway through the poem I realized that half of them had probably never heard of Monk. When the audience is less sophisticated I find it incumbent on the poet to lay some kind of framework for the poems.

LA: I think that the themes are universal, and as far as I'm concerned, Monk is a metaphor for great Black musicians, or great musicians. Monk himself is important in that he inspired the poem, but you're talking about something much bigger than Monk. That's what a poem, as an art form, would bring to the people. It is useful to explain, but the poem should be able to stand on its own.

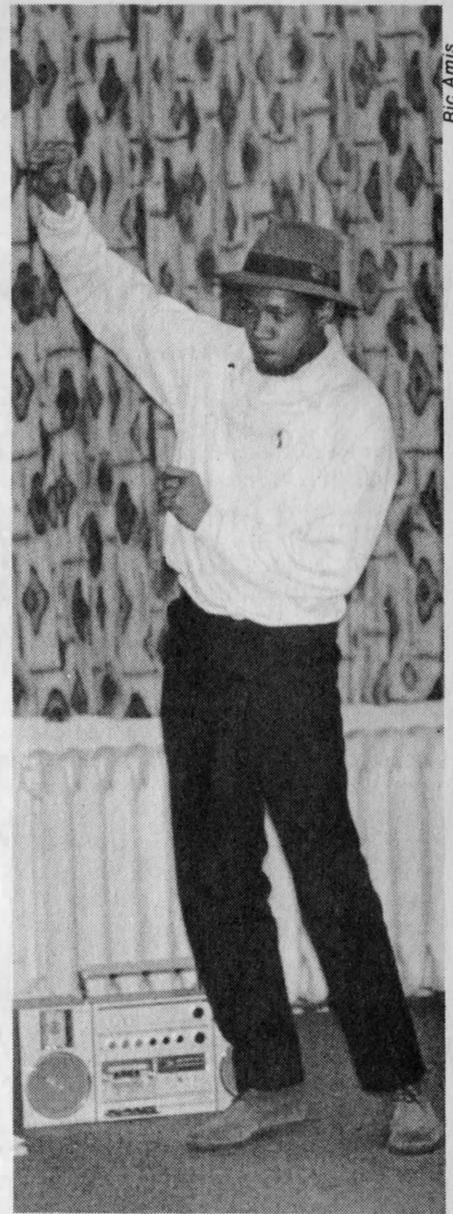
Wearing away the dictates of oppression

DH: Most of the poetry that I write is about oppressed people. It comes from music too. I use a lot of images, mostly of young people, street kids, who are down and out. When I write about oppressed people, it's because that is reality for me; I don't write about people that I can't see. It's no use writing in isolation. If you go down on the street and know the people the reality comes out more.

LA: I hear Devon talking about oppressed people like its somebody else. It's a word that means something 'out there', it's a word that you don't associate with yourself because it means that something is wrong with you.

DH: But most of my stuff is personal too.

CJ: We too are within the sphere of oppression, and it's from there that we address ourselves to the socio-political environment. In some circles we could still be poets if we were to sit down and write about, for instance, 5th century Greece. The Augustans, Pope, et.al. went back to the classic period to find some inspiration, and you were worth nothing if you didn't have that kind of knowledge. It took some of the romantics, Byron, Shelley, Keats, etc. to break out of that kind of form, to a poetry where you are relating to some kind of experience. But even then you are not relating to the people, you're appealing to those who have interpreted the peo-



Clifton Joseph

ple and have put them into certain kinds of categories — oppressed and disadvantaged categories. We are part of that whole framework and so it's only natural that what we do comes out of that framework. We are concerned about resisting oppression. . . .

LA: And we are resisting it in a lot of ways, in what we are saying and how we are saying it. We're wearing away those dictates from that society, so that now those people are saying "What is poetry anyway?" It used to be based on a very strict set of rules, and now they are calling all kinds of things poetry. We have tried to wear away at that particular institution and we're smiling now.

CJ: The categories change. For instance, despite the fact that the beat generation wrote so much poetry, they are still considered to be outside the *real* category of poetry. When university

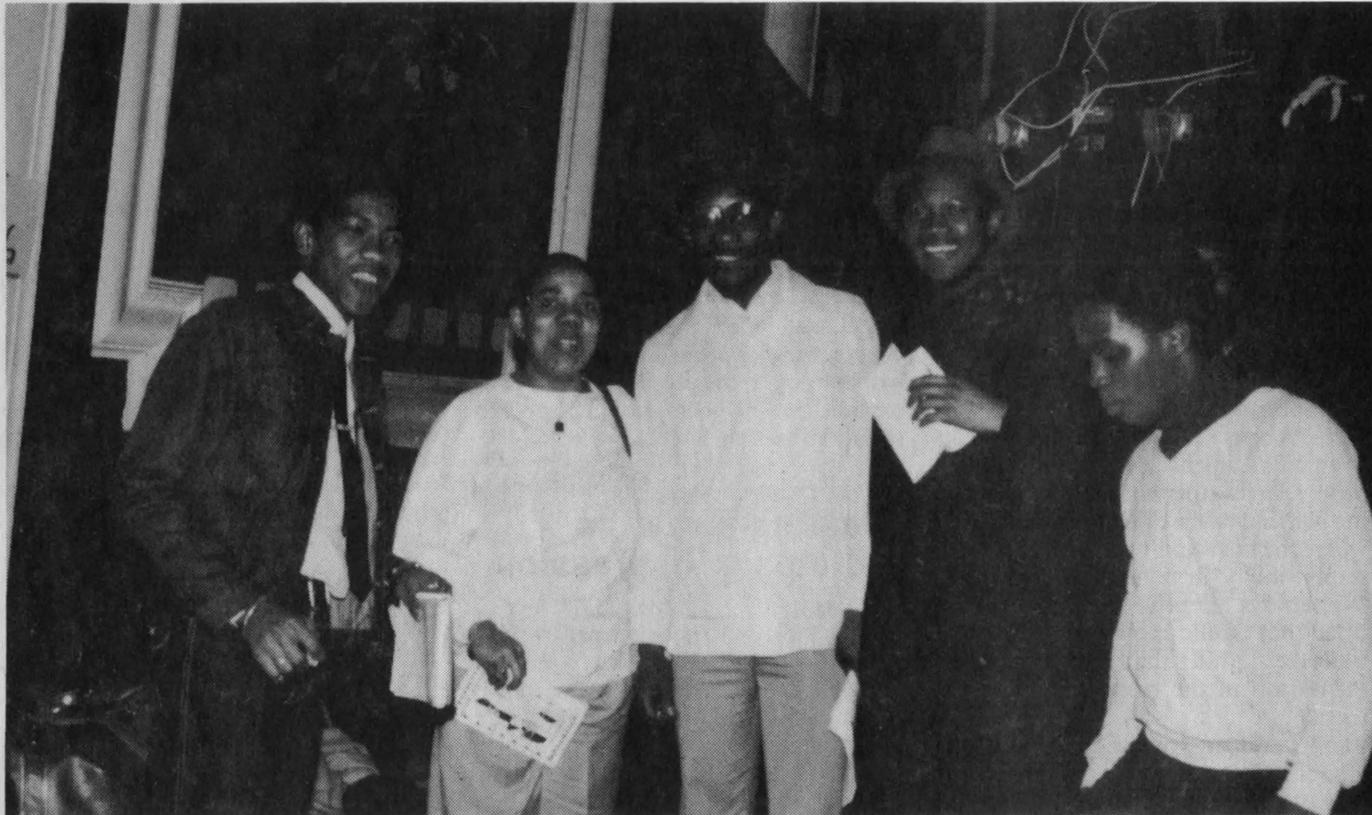
curriculums are put together, and they have, say, an anthology of 20th century poetry, most of those people who were doing really vital work get left out, the ones who were actually relating to people, working in a social environment. There are two kinds of poetry then, simplistically speaking: one on the "high" level — the convoluted,

and they react, it's the audience that decides, in a way, the forms that you take. You're feeding off them, so you always have a connection with them. If we stray away from that I think we will become more and more mystical, and less intellectually honest.

FUSE: What about the trip to England?

Lillian?

LA: I want to make that international connection, some links with others who are doing the same kind of thing on the other side of the world. I'm hoping we will be able to maintain these links — perhaps we can get these people over here. I think that we need this kind of exchange to develop the work. We can



Members of Domestic Bliss with Linton Kwesi Johnson (3rd from left) and an unidentified 'fan'.

mystical level, where you are dealing mainly with form — and the other, more vital one where you are in a constant state of flux, you're dealing with the influences of the environment, where the focus is on content.

FUSE: You were talking about those poets who use the classics for their base, but you also have your own brand of classics, like Marcus Garvey, Louise Bennet and Bob Marley, history that hasn't been touched in this context before.

CJ: Yes, but I talk about Monk and Devon talks about racism in the media — you don't hear Bob Marley, or Peter Tosh, or **Truth and Rights**, or **Gayap** on the radio — and Lillian does her readings from Louise Bennet, where she is dealing with the whole aspect of language — this is the language we speak, it is our vital selves and is no different from Chaucer, Burns, Lady Grizzle or Shakespeare in their particular contexts; but people see ours as a deficiency. This is the kind of stuff we have to face. So when we read to people

CJ: This is the second time around for this *National Bookfair of Radical Black and Third World Books*, organized by *Bogle L'Overture*, *Race Today* and *New Beacon Books*. People from all over the world come together in an international forum and show what they are doing. We still have to fight with the established publishers and the established critics and press who neglect some of the work we do. An intentional event like this brings all of it together, so we can see for ourselves what is being done, we can exchange. On the 15th of March we will be on the same bill as Linton Kwesi Johnson from Jamaica, who is based in England, Sonya Sanchez, who has been working in America for the past two decades, Wole Soyinka from Nigeria, and Ngugi Wa Thiong'o from Kenya. We get a chance to expose what we are doing to other people, and to be exposed to them and their experiences. We can feed each other, because you need that kind of sustenance so that what you are doing is not in isolation.

FUSE: What will you be looking for,

share techniques that work, we can support each other's creativity. And we might be able to organized something like what we have done here amongst ourselves, on an international level.

DH: I hope to get the international exposure too. It's a great opportunity to meet and perform with the people I've been hearing about who have been important in the development of my work and who I've never seen.

CJ: It's a big move for us, definitely, because we understand rampant institutionalized colonialism, and we might stay here in Toronto for ever and bounce our heads against the wall. Because of the general situation of artists in Toronto, you aren't really recognized in your own community, you have to go outside of it to be recognized. If you get a review in the *New York Times*, or the *Melody Maker*, then the local press will start rushing after you for interviews. This will be a trip for us where we will be able to break out of that milieu, we can show that what we do has international

CHECK IT OUT

I woz walking doun de road
de oda day
a reach de intaseshan
of Bloor an Bay

I site som yout man
pon de line
lookin really kool
an really fine

Ah tek one step forward
no step backward
I sae wats appennin
dey said Its a ustlin
I sae but why de bustlin
an dey said Its ah prosti
prosti
prostitushan prostitushan

Fifty dollar by de our
aftaward yuh tek ah showa
back pon de line
an yuh feelin really fine

An yuh fi really check it out
really really check it out
an yuh fi really check it out.

Ninty eight per cent
of de youts of today
drap out a school
cause dem coudnt find noh way
fi live up to de standard of society
so many drap out fi face up reality
reality
reality
reality

an yuh fi really check it out
really really check it out
sae one day dey shal defeat de shitstym
yout unemployment
its a yout exploitin.

Devon Haughton

CHUCKIE PROPHECY

*im wuk
innah wan smelly
sweaty
stinkin'/duty FAC'TRY
innah de daytime
nighttime
earlymorningtime
fuh very likkle likkle money
but come de WEEKENDTIME
BACKSIDE: IM FLASHY FLASHY FLASHY*

*see im poppin style innah im CADILLAC
watch im pull innah de station
fuh some GAS/O/LINE
hear im as he tips im FEATHERED/FEDORA/HAT:
ayyyyyy Jack: fill she up...
wid a dollars' worth of GAS/O/LINE
watch im as he digs innah de pockets
of im THREE/PIECE/GAB/ER/DINE
an shift innah im CHICAGO/GANGSTER/LEAN
im cussin like hell
dat MONDAY will come AGAIN
an interrupt im WEEKEND/PARTY
CONSOLING/PARTLY
DANCING/HAUGHTI-*

*LY time
in dis here
COLD/COLD/COLD NORTHERN CLIME*

*TIME WILL COME AROUND
WHEN CHUCKIE'S DISGRUNTLED FROWNS
WILL SEND SKYSCRAPERS/ON/FIRE
TUMBLING DOWN*

DOWN

DOWN

*DOWN DOWN DOWN
DOWN DOWN DOWN DOWN
DOWN DOWN DOWN DOWN DOWN
DOWN DOWN DOWN TO THE GROUND
IN THESE HERE NORTHERN BABYLON/TOWNS*

Clifton Joseph

Lalumba

Lalumba,
Don't be fooled by me or the face that I wear,
The mask I learn for ceremonies and rituals that make
of this social reality,
Fools even me sometimes.
Yes, it fools me, because it covers the soft tender African
nature beneath my Western coverings.
Know this Lalumba, my brother, and not be scared by
my masquerade.
For my heart is yearning to sing, to find your music, to
strike the cord and bring the melody of harmony
into our lives.
Be gentle Lalumba, when you strum the guitar or beat
upon your drum for I am terrified.
I am afraid of our own music, or own song.
I am afraid, Lalumba for my song frightens me.
My feet move to the drums of Angela, Malcolm,
Tubman, Turner, Fidel and the many others.
I panic, Lalumba, when I think of the times I've danced
to the music of fakers, posers and pimps.
Have danced pleasures into pain, and pain into a barrack
That have furnished me with yet another mask
To hide the fact, that I can feel and, have felt pain and
hurting.
I'm paining because of this mask.
I want to tear off this mask, to breathe freely again,
To feel your touch and not the touch transmitted by a
mask.

Lalumba, I want to bridge this rift between us.
Would it help if I burn my mask?
Let you touch my face?
Will you touch my real self tenderly with care
And surround it with trust?

Can you, Lalumba, acknowledge my real self?
Can you accept me — Black, African Woman, Mother,
Fighter, Sister, Friend?
Must love then follow?
I want you to know that I wait for you, that I anger at
you because of the hurt.
I want you to know that you are important to me, and I
know that I am important to you, especially when
we pain.
Let's bridge this rift between us.

Will you meet me, Lalumba, some place down the road,
Some place on this desert-ridden, God-forsaken strait.
It won't be no half-way, my brother, or no quarter-way.

But just you hit that road,
Just you put your foot on one pebble
Just you hit that road and I'll be there —
STRONG, BLACK, AFRICAN WOMAN.

I'll be coming.

Lillian Allen

poetry reprinted from:

RHYTHM AND HARD TIMES by Lillian Allen
DOMESTIC BLISS by Krisantha Sri Bhag-
giyadatta
METROPOLITAN BLUES by Clifton Joseph
ROOTS AN' CULTURE by Devon Haughton

appeal.

We had a good experience with Edward Brathwaite, an international poet. He has just received a Guggenheim Foundation grant, was published by Oxford University Press, is at the University of the West Indies, and is now on sabbatical doing a bibliography of West Indian poetry from the year zero to now. He had been through Toronto a number of times, speaking and reading at conferences, and he never was really exposed to what was happening here. When we heard he was at Harbourfront, we decided that we would organize an event with him, a poetry reception/performance, and he was quite surprised and impressed favourably by the stuff that we are doing. Toronto hasn't had a very high profile in the Black world, in terms of literary achievements.

LA: He said that he never dreamt that this was going on.

CJ: And when we were all there together, the cumulative effect of it was quite powerful for him. So I think that when we go over to England, people over there, people from the international realm who are not familiar with the stuff that's happening here, will be quite surprised that such a thing is happening the way that it is here. I think we will definitely have a heavy impact on them, because when the four of us get together and do our stuff it has the stamp of Toronto on it, regardless of what some people might think.

FUSE: Let's talk a bit about the publications.

CJ: The burgeoning publishing conglomerate, *Domestic Bliss*, came about because we all associate with one another, and we realized that we had to create an institution for ourselves — that is, we couldn't sit around and wait to be published by a company that didn't exist. I think Lillian's book is very important when we start talking about publishing, because when she brought out *Rhythm an' Hard Times* she was able to sell 500 copies in the space of six weeks. She isn't the first person to publish Black poetry in Toronto, but to do so well with people who don't normally read poetry, to have people coming to her and calling her and buying 3 or 4 copies and talking to her about the poems, this was extraordinary. We thought that something was happening here. Other people have published, and the books have just stayed on the shelves. I realized that I could do the same thing, so I came out with *Metropolitan Blues*, after I met up with Krisantha and Lillian, published under the name of

recipes for marital stability and domestic bliss

do we share ideas
where we go
what we do

it seems we only agree
on the stoned silences

between shouting matches

you smoke cigarettes
don't do the dishes
when we eat

all you do it seems
when you come here
is talk on the phone

never at rest

does it look like a phone booth
a walk-in mall off the street
off your journey
you want to go camping
because that's what lovers do
in the commercials

i thought i just finished
going through the dust-kicking stage
ten evictions a year

oh i know we live in the desert

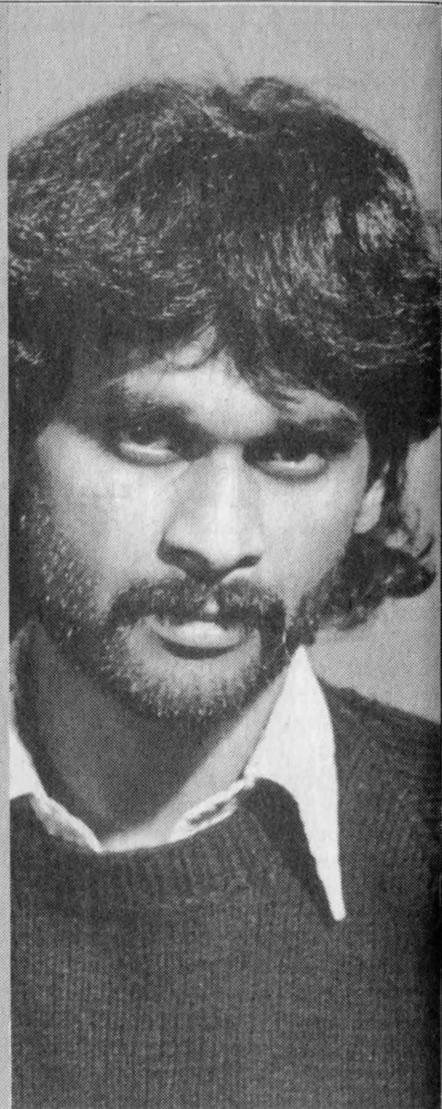
but you eat the same junk food
over and over
see the same yankee movies
over and over

kiss me, you demand
like a cop
saying, hand it over

i know we live in this desert

but don't walk in
with your boots on!

Ric Amis



Krisantha Sri Bhaggiyadatta

Domestic Bliss, and I was able to do the same thing. I have to do a second printing, because I've sold all the copies we printed. And when we print Devon's book the same thing will happen.

FUSE: I was going to ask you what the relationship is between *Is 5* and *Domestic Bliss*?

CJ: *Is 5* is really our printer/consultant. They are very supportive of us — they co-published Krisantha's book. It was only natural, after the success of Lillian's book, that we should try to duplicate that success. We have a Black community of about a quarter of a million, which is a little less than ten percent of the population, plus we have a lot of progressives and supporters in other communities. So we have a whole lot of people out there to appeal to. We have read to thousands of people in the past year. We haven't really even started to distribute seriously yet — we have been able to sell a lot at readings. We know we can do it with Devon's book, *Roots and Culture*, which we are

about to launch.

Irreversible gains

LA: There are a lot of other people who are not coming out of the woodwork — a lot of young people. They phone us and come around to see us and talk about their writing. We are quite happy for this connection and exchange. In this way we make ourselves really accessible. We intend to keep this energy and momentum going, at least until a large enough body of work is out there to involve and encourage the community, in writing and publishing. In other words, we want to ensure that some irreversible gains are made and people coming after us won't have to start from scratch as we did.

FUSE: What about recording?

CJ: That of course is the next obvious step. We will be going into the studio this summer, as you know, to record with *Voicespondance*. □