



Official Selection
Trinidad and Tobago
Film Festival

BAD FRIDAY

A documentary by

Deborah A. Thomas, John L. Jackson, Jr. and Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn



Official Selection
Hollywood Black
Film Festival

Third World Newsreel
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Fire is the Light of Struggle, paper collage by Theodore A. Harris

BAD FRIDAY

Rastafari After Coral Gardens

A documentary by Deborah A. Thomas, John L. Jackson, Jr. and Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn
2011, 63 min

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Bad Friday chronicles the history of violence in Jamaica through the eyes of its most iconic community – Rastafari – and shows how people use their recollections of the Coral Gardens “incident” in 1963 to imagine new possibilities for the future.

LONG SYNOPSIS

For many around the world, Jamaica conjures up images of pristine beach vacations with a pulsating reggae soundtrack. The country, however, also has one of the highest per capita murder rates in the world, and the population is actively grappling with legacies of Western imperialism, racial slavery, and political nationalism – the historical foundations of contemporary violence in Jamaica and throughout the Americas.

Bad Friday focuses on a community of Rastafarians in western Jamaica who annually commemorate the 1963 Coral Gardens “incident,” a moment just after independence when the Jamaican government rounded up, jailed and tortured hundreds of Rastafarians. It chronicles the history of violence in Jamaica through the eyes of its most iconic community, and shows how people use their recollections of past traumas to imagine new possibilities for a collective future.

REVIEWS

“Bad Friday is live evidence for reparations from the Government of Jamaica for the Coral Gardens atrocity of 11 April 1963. The Prime Minister Sir Alexander Bustamante’s order to “Bring in all Rastas, dead or alive!” is a crime against humanity that should not be forgotten.”

Ras Iyah V and Ras Flako, Rastafari Coral Gardens Committee

“Amidst the proliferation of films on Rasta, none have managed to fathom the Rastafari experience of their Jamaican Babylon like Bad Friday. Now that Rasta is an increasingly co-opted global culture, this is as close as the untutored will get to understanding the meanings of being ‘Dread’ during the pre-reggae period when adherents were viewed as a ‘cult of outcasts’ and routinely victimized. A powerful and timely historical document that speaks to the ways that remembering-and-forgetting continue to shape Jamaica’s post-colonial identity.”
Jake Homiak, Curator of ‘Discovering Rastafari’, Smithsonian Institution

“By bringing to us the poignant testimony of the men and women who witnessed and whose lives were forever scarred by these events, Bad Friday obliges us to confront the shocking level of state violence that was unleashed against not only the individuals involved, but also against the entire Rastafarian community of Jamaica. Now, thanks to this evocative film, we are able to appreciate the full horror of the events from that distant time and what they portended. I salute and congratulate everyone involved in the making of this redemptive and truly valuable work of historical memory.”

Robert A. Hill, University of California, Los Angeles



Bad Friday: Rastafari After Coral Gardens

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BIOS

John L. Jackson, Jr. Producer and Co-Director. Jackson is Richard Perry University Professor of Communication and Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. He has produced several fiction and non-fiction films, features and shorts. He is the author of *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America*, *Real Black: Adventures in Racial Sincerity*, and *Racial Paranoia: The Unintended Consequences of Political Correctness*.

Deborah A. Thomas, Producer and Co-Director. Thomas is Professor and Chair of the Graduate Group in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Modern Blackness: Nationalism, Globalization, and The Politics of Culture in Jamaica*, *Exceptional Violence: Embodied Citizenship in Transnational Jamaica*, and co-editor of the volume *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness*. Prior to her life as an academic, she was a professional dancer with the New York-based Urban Bush Women.

Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn, Producer and Music Director. Wedderburn is an accomplished percussionist who has performed and recorded with a variety of well-known reggae artistes, and who has also composed percussive scores for dance. His own percussion group, Ancient Vibrations, presents traditional Afro-Jamaican rhythms and chants, the roots of reggae music. Wedderburn has played with *The Lion King* on Broadway since it began development in 1997.

Junior "Ista J" Manning, Producer. Prior to his death in March 2010, Manning, a Rastafarian from Trelawny who was based in Montego Bay, organized the annual Coral Gardens Commemoration and was leader of the Ethio-Africa Diaspora Union Millennium Council. Manning was also a member of the Reparations Commission that was appointed by the Jamaican government in March 2009.



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RECENT AND UPCOMING SCREENINGS

Jamaica Premiere, Bob Marley Museum, June 2011

Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival, October 2011

Hollywood Black Film Festival, October 2011

Association of the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora, November 2011

Culture Reggae Salute, November 2011

Scribe Video Center, December 2011

Political Science Conference, March 2012



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CREDITS

A documentary by Deborah A. Thomas and John L. Jackson, Jr. and Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn

Produced by John L. Jackson, Jr., Deborah A. Thomas, Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn, Junior "Ista J" Manning

Camera Operators:

Deborah A. Thomas
Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn

John L. Jackson, Jr.
Philip "Ambokele" Henry
Alvin "Muggy" Davis

Editor: John L. Jackson, Jr.

Sound Engineers: Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn and Alain VanAchte

Musical Composition/Direction: Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn

Additional Compositions: Thomas Brett, Bongie Duma, Horace James

Musicians: Akete, Grant Braddock, Thomas Brett, Lindewe Dlamini, Horace James, Jordan, Thulu Mabena, David Ondrick, Sanga of the Valley, Abbashani Wedderburn, Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn

Vocalists: Bongie Duma, Trejah Ethiopia, Philip "Ambokele" Henry, Horace James, Kheswa, Ras Menelik, Derrick Passley, Carl "Rev" Richards, Clyde Wedderburn

Musical Compositions:

"Hard Times Ska"

"Saga"

"Here Comes the Rastaman"

"Supplication Chant"

"Stepping Dub"

"Binghi Chant"

"Take I Home"

"Second Line"

"Rastaman Chant"

"Testify"

"The Elders Song," written and performed by Queen Takiyah

"Babylon," written and performed by Uzalo

"Zion Calling," written and performed by Uzalo

"Dry Bones Dub"

Audio mixed and recorded at AV Studios, Brooklyn, New York

Narrator: Carol Narcisse

Artist: Philip "Ambokele" Henry (portrait of Rudolph Franklin)

Archival Footage:

The National Library of Jamaica

The Jamaica Gleaner Co., Ltd.

BBC Films

University of Pennsylvania, Film Archives

Special Thanks:

Ancient Vibrations

Philmore Alvaranga

Dierdre Hart Chang

Barry Chevannes

Jasmine Cobb

Andrew Crocco

Michael X. Delli Carpini

Esther Figueroa

Honor Ford Smith

Ras Flako

Lord Anthony Gifford

Sonia Harris

Robert A. Hill

Mike Henry

Jake Homiak

Icient Iyah

Ras Iyah V

Ras Jahnoi M. Jaja

Tshani Jaja

Ras Kanaka

Carol Lawes

Brother Roy McPherson

Gretta Moody

Carol Narcisse

Jahlani Niaah

Annie Paul

Sheree Rhoden

Bianca Robinson

Mario Rodriguez

Robert Simpson

Hugh Small

Bongo Jerry Small

Riley Snorton

Vanessa Spence

Sonjah Stanley

Queen Takiyah

Brother "Kiddie" Thoompson

D. Alissa Trotz

Uzalo

Khadijah White

Eddie "First Man" Wray

The Pitfour Nyabinghi Centre

The Rastafari Coral Gardens Committee

The Annenberg School for Communication and the Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania

Extra Special Thanks to: All the elders who went through the struggle and were willing to recount their experiences.

In Memorium: Junior "Ista J" Manning, without whose vision and hard work this project would not have been realized, and who worked tirelessly to ensure the continued growth of the worldwide community of Rastafari.



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Thomas

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Howard Campbell • Gleaner Writer

Holy Thursday 1963 was not the peaceful worship day residents of Coral Gardens, St James had envisaged. Church services were overshadowed by a bloody clash between a band of Rastafarians and police that resulted in the deaths of eight persons.

The Coral Gardens incident is one of the most controversial in modern Jamaica. A new documentary, *Bad Friday: Rastafari After Coral Gardens*, revisits the event and sheds light on some of its key figures.

Bad Friday had its local premiere on June 23 at the Bob Marley Museum in St Andrew. It was co-produced by Deborah Thomas, her husband John Jackson and Junior Wedderburn.

The Jamaica-born Thomas and Jackson are anthropology professors at the University of Pennsylvania. Wedderburn, who hails from Portland, is a musician who has worked on Broadway productions like *The Lion King*.

"It's satisfying to see that we're helping to bring to light an aspect of history that's been silenced in Jamaican society," Thomas told Arts & Education.

"It's a moment that people don't really hear about or know about."

Three Rastafarians, three civilians and two policemen died at Coral Gardens. Among the dead was Rudolph Franklin, the militant leader of the Rasta group that set the Ken Douglas Shell service station on fire, before killing the civilians, corporal Clifford Melbourne and Inspector Bertie Scott.

rounded up and arrested

Then prime minister, Sir Alexander Bustamante, went to St James with the commissioner of police and head

of the Jamaica Defence Force. A strong detachment of police from neighbouring parishes was dispatched to Coral Gardens and surrounding areas where more than 150 'beard men' were rounded up and arrested.

There were reports that many of these persons - who had no part in the incident - were arrested, jailed, beaten and tortured. At the time, there was widespread prejudice against Rastafarians in Jamaica.

Several survivors, including Walter Brissett and Enid Steele, were interviewed by Thomas and her team and appear in the documentary. They also attended the premiere.

Selbourne A. Reid, a 26-year-old constable who took part in the police expedition, was also interviewed at his home in Florida. Reid has written a book on what was then labelled the 'Rasta Uprising'.

Thomas said she first became aware of the Coral Gardens stand-off 15 years ago when she read the book, *Violence and Politics in Jamaica, 1960-1970*.

Her interest was revived in 2007 when Rastafarians in Coral Gardens honoured the fallen as part of events marking the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

The violence in Coral Gardens was triggered by a land dispute the previous year involving Franklin, a Cornwall College graduate who had embraced the Rastafarian faith. He was reportedly farming illegally on land in the Tryall area owned by the Kerr-Jarrett family.

During an altercation with a police officer, he was shot five times and left for dead in a churchyard. Discovered by schoolchildren, Franklin was taken to hospital where he was treated but, on his release, was charged with possession of ganja.

He was sentenced to six months in prison and, according to those who knew him, was an embittered person when released in early 1963. Further police harassment, they said, pushed him over the edge and sparked the Coral Gardens attack.

Franklin and two of his accomplices, Lloyd Waldron and Noel Bowen, were killed at Coral Gardens. Two others, Carlton Bowen and Clinton Larman, were charged with murder and went on trial in July 1964. They were found guilty and sentenced to hang following a month-long trial presided over by Justice Ronald Small, father of current Queen's Counsel Hugh Small. Bowen and Larmond were hanged on December 2, 1964.

Bad Friday: Rastafari After Coral Gardens is scheduled to be shown at the Trinidad and Tobago Film Festival in September.

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Bad Friday and its aftermaths: Rastafari and Reparations in Jamaica

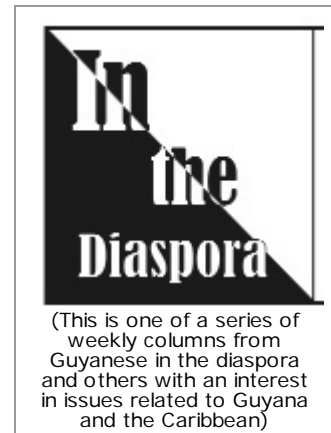
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Deborah A. Thomas is Professor of Anthropology and Africana Studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

By Deborah A. Thomas

"Rastas on rampage in MoBay – 8 persons killed." So screamed the headline of Jamaica's daily afternoon paper, the Star, on 11 April 1963. Two days later the Daily Gleaner led their news coverage with four articles under the heading "8 killed after attack on gas station. Two policemen, three Rastafarians among the dead." And by 10:00 am on that fateful Holy Thursday morning, RJR (then Radio Jamaica and the Re-Diffusion Network, now Radio Jamaica) reported the following: "Three people are now known to have died in this morning's uprising by Rastafarians in Montego Bay." For those who today understand Rastafarians as primarily advocating a philosophy of universalism (the "One Love" Bob Marley sang about), and even for those who prefer to foreground Rastafari's ideological roots in black supremacy and pan-Africanism and its more general black nationalist stance, news of a "rampage" or an "uprising" by Rastafarians would seem uncharacteristic. But during that immediate post-independence period in Jamaica, fear and disdain were the attitudes most commonly directed toward Rastafarians, not only by those in the middle and upper classes, but also by many working-class Jamaicans. This means that events that were primarily local in scope generated national attention and concern.

In this case, the high level of concern was marked by the fact that the Prime Minister at the time – Sir Alexander Bustamante – flew to Montego Bay, Jamaica's second city, accompanied by the Commissioner of Police, the top command of the Jamaica Defense Force, the Security Chief, two Ministers of Government, and several police from the headquarters in Kingston. Once in Montego Bay, Bustamante mobilized police forces from St. James, as well as those from the neighboring parishes of Hanover, Trelawny, and Westmoreland, to join with civilians in the roundup of Rastafarians. Ultimately, because of the actions of five "bearded" individuals who were motivated by an ongoing land dispute, over one hundred and fifty Rastafarians were arrested, jailed, beaten, and tortured. In addition to three of those five who were involved in the attacks on the gas station, a nearby motel, and an estate manager's home, an unknown number of Rastafarians died as a result of these tortures, and many more were permanently scarred. Since the 1990s, a group of Rastafarians in Western Jamaica has kept a public vigil commemorating this "Bad Friday," and in 2007, this vigil was folded into the yearlong schedule of events designed to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. At these commemorations, elder Rastafarians offer testimony about their experiences, asking that the government make a formal apology to the Rastafarian community and that it consider reparations of some sort.



(This is one of a series of weekly columns from Guyanese in the diaspora and others with an interest in issues related to Guyana and the Caribbean)

I had first learned about the Coral Gardens "incident" as a graduate student fifteen years earlier when I read the book *Violence and Politics in Jamaica, 1960-1970* by Terry Lacey. Lacey discussed Coral Gardens briefly as one among several incidents that provoked Jamaicans to believe that Rastafarians as a whole were ready to violently revolt against the Jamaican state, thereby justifying an oppressive security policy. Wendell Bell and his student James Mau, American sociologists who conducted research in Jamaica during the 1960s, also wrote about the events that transpired at Coral Gardens in order to demonstrate that middle- and upper-class Jamaicans have consistently viewed the Jamaican "masses" as hostile, menacing, and ready to revolt at any moment. Professor Rex Nettleford treated the Coral Gardens "incident" somewhat more substantially in his classic *Mirror, Mirror: Identity, Race, and Protest in Jamaica* in order to show how Rasta became associated in the minds of the Jamaican middle class public with crime and violence. However, like the Green Bay Massacre of 1978, the official archive of what happened at Coral Gardens is slim, and most of it relies on Gleaner reports (though John Maxwell did some excellent reporting on the events and their aftermaths in *Public Opinion*). When I saw the notice in the Gleaner about the 2007 commemoration and its links to the events related to the

bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade, therefore, I decided to attend to see if I could get a more grassroots sense of what happened to trigger the events at Coral Gardens, and to find out more about the injustices that took place afterwards.

I traveled down with my friend Junior Wedderburn, a musician and Rastafarian from Portland, Jamaica who migrated to the U.S. twenty-five years ago. Junior was the drummer for the dance company I performed with years ago, and now plays for The Lion King on Broadway. During the plane ride down, Junior confessed that though he and the older Rastafarians who mentored him were no strangers to harassment at the hands of the police and other agents of the state, he had never heard about Coral Gardens, or about the suffering of the elders there in 1963. In part, he felt that this was the result of the particularly uneasy structural position of families like his when he was growing up. Working-class black people throughout Jamaica who were reading or hearing about what happened at Coral Gardens would likely have felt sympathy for the Rastas, he argued, because of a sense that the government's actions were motivated at least in part by a desire to undermine the development of black pride. However, because at the time Rasta and black pride were so intertwined, and because Rasta was seen by people like his parents as a fearful thing – even though they themselves had been influenced in the development of their own black pride by movements like Marcus Garvey's – they would not have wanted to discuss the incident for fear of driving their own children toward Rasta. We were both eager, therefore, to hear the stories, to try to find out “what really happened” on that fateful “Bad Friday,” and to learn what kind of reparations were being envisioned.

At the commemoration, we were fortunate to meet a few elders who were willing to talk with us about their experiences. I was, at the time, in the middle of writing a book about violence in Jamaica, and I thought that it might be compelling to think through the Coral Gardens events as a way to discuss state violence against Rastafari and its connections to more general patterns of political violence in Jamaica. Toward this end, I asked one of the elders if he would retrace his steps with me, to show me as we walked along the landscape what exactly had happened to him during the days following Holy Thursday 1963. To my great surprise, he asked whether it wouldn't be more effective to do that on film. “Of course,” I said, and thus began our odyssey as documentarians.

Junior, my husband John Jackson (who actually is a filmmaker), and I set about tracking down elders with the help of the late Junior “Ista J” Manning, Ras Simba from Trelawny, and others. We interviewed them on camera about how they came to the Rasta faith, what happened to them as a result of Coral Gardens, and how they envisioned justice. We developed written agreements both with the individuals we interviewed, and with broader bodies of Rastafarians who had been involved in the struggle for intellectual copyright protection, among other things. We searched for archival footage of the era, and for other experts who could speak about the long-term effects of the events at Coral Gardens as well as more general efforts toward reparations. And on Friday 21 April 2011, the anniversary of Bad Friday, we showed the film at the annual commemoration to a rapt audience.

Jamaica is known all over the world for Rasta and reggae music, but so few understand the extent of the persecution that was so common in the early years, and the more subtle forms of discrimination against Rastafari that have persisted over the years. Our agenda through this process has been to bring the information of what happened to Rasta in 1963 to as broad an audience as possible, both within and beyond Jamaica. We have endeavoured to support the efforts of the community to garner some sort of official recognition and reparation, and hope that the film can assist in that process as well. In this regard, it is my understanding from Iyah V, one of the leaders of the Rastafarian Coral Gardens Committee, that the Public Defender, Mr. Earl Witter, asked him for copies of the film after the commemoration to assist them in collecting sworn testimonies from elders who went through the “crucifixion,” as they call it.

For my part, I feel that an official apology for and investigation into the events at Coral Gardens is crucial for the individuals directly affected, for the Rastafarian community as a whole, and for Jamaican society more generally. This is because it would require us – as a society – to confront the ways citizenship has not been equally available to all in post-independence Jamaica, and to come to terms with the ways threats to the body politic have been imagined and eradicated. It would compel us to think about both the limits and possibilities of reparations as a framework through which we might seek greater recognition of the historical rootedness of contemporary inequalities, not only in Jamaica but also throughout the black world. And it would force us to think creatively about how to live well together into the future.

Mel Cooke, Gleaner Writer

In a predominantly Christian society, even if mainly in form and not function, Rastafari occupies a curious middle space. Embraced on the artistic performance stage and the hairstyle - especially among women - the epitome of 'natural' among non-Rastafarians, as a system of spirituality, Rastafari is still at best a curiosity for the Christian majority.

This may have much to do with its origins among the poorer class of the society - and the documentary **Bad Friday**, which was screened to a large audience at 56 Hope Road, St Andrew, last Thursday evening, utilises these roots, in its exploration of what is popularly known as the Coral Gardens Incident.

As it occurred around Good Friday, in customary inversion and subversion of language to Rastafari, it has become known as 'Bad Friday', now the name of the documentary.

Elder Rastafari, as well as the western Kingston community of Back O' Wall (bulldozed to make way for, in part, Tivoli Gardens) are introduced early in 'Bad Friday' and the documentary's purpose is quickly made clear. For while it puts into audiovisual form memories oft-repeated live at the annual Coral Gardens remembrances in Montego Bay, St James, there is another objective to **Bad Friday**.

One Rastafari says in the early stages: "Apology can't be empty-handed, just a word use. Where is the recompense?"

While the actual incident, which includes the razing of a gas station, is at the core of the documentary, much of the screen time is dedicated to Rastafari speaking about the brutality which they were subjected to, even though they were totally unconnected to the occurrences in Montego Bay.

And while the recounting of beatings, not only by the security forces but also private citizens, is harrowing, the depth of the humiliation is driven home by one man's simple statement - "them beat me in front of me generation".

There are other very striking statements, a retired policeman who is a rare non-Rastafarian voice in **Bad Friday** saying that oftentimes at shooting practice the target images had locks. "In our mind that was the look of a criminal," he said.

There is another notable non-Rastafarian voice, that of the late Professor Barry Chevannes, speaking not only in an interview, but also at a Coral Gardens remembrance incident.

repression

Coral Gardens did not happen in isolation; **Bad Friday** traces a pattern of repression that includes the 1950 seaside murder and rape legendary for the name 'Wappy King', the 1957 Coronation Market Riot and Rev Claudius Henry's arrest for treason in 1960.

The shooting of Rudolph precipitated the Coral Gardens Incident and widespread backlash against Rastafari, the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) government coming in for very harsh criticism.

In addition to utilising still images from the period, including newspaper text, **Bad Friday** also has the contribution of Lord Anthony Gifford, Mike Henry and Hugh Small, among others, making for a production which speaks to the Coral Gardens incident from multiple angles and also gives the long-term perspective.

Jamaica

<http://www.jamaicans.com/articles/primeinterviews/MakingBadFridayBetter.shtml>

Making Bad Friday Better: An Interview with Deborah Thomas

Dr. Deborah A. Thomas is a professor anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, a dancer, and most recently added filmmaker to her accomplishments. Deborah directed and produced the new documentary *Bad Friday* in partnership with her husband John L. Jackson, Jr.; Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn; and Junior "Ista J" Manning. *Bad Friday* focuses on a community of Rastafarians in western Jamaica who annually commemorate the 1963 Coral Gardens "incident," a moment just after independence when the Jamaican government rounded up, jailed and tortured hundreds of Rastafarians

By [Andrea E. Shaw](#)



Dr. Deborah A. Thomas

Dr. Deborah A. Thomas is a professor anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, a dancer, and most recently added filmmaker to her accomplishments. Deborah directed and produced the new documentary *Bad Friday* in partnership with her husband John L. Jackson, Jr.; Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn; and Junior "Ista J" Manning. *Bad Friday* focuses on a community of Rastafarians in western Jamaica who annually commemorate the 1963 Coral Gardens "incident," a moment just after independence when the Jamaican government rounded up, jailed and tortured hundreds of

Rastafarians. It chronicles the history of violence in Jamaica through the eyes of its most iconic community, and shows how people use their recollections of past traumas to imagine new possibilities for the future. Here is our conversation with Deborah on her new film *Bad Friday*.

Please tell us about the event that is the subject of your documentary *Bad Friday*.

On April 11, 1963, five men understood to be Rastafari responded to a long-term land dispute that had resulted in the shooting and imprisonment of Rudolph Franklin by seeking revenge on the handful of persons who were responsible. In doing so, they burned down a gas station and killed a number of persons including two policemen and a white Jamaican from Kingston. As a result of the hysteria that followed, Bustamante is said to have proclaimed, "Bring in all Rasta, dead or alive!", and as police attempted to find those who perpetrated the incidents in Coral Gardens, civilians also arranged themselves into vigilante groups and hunted down all Rastafari in western Jamaica and beyond. This meant that Rastafari far from the event itself were being rounded up, beaten, jailed, and in some cases killed, only because of the Jamaican population's extreme fear of Rastafari during that period.

How did you come to know about this incident in Coral Gardens, given that it is has generally received limited discussion in the Caribbean media?

It is mentioned briefly in a couple scholarly books dealing with the decade after independence, but in these cases the authors relied on *The Gleaner's* (Jamaica's

most widely circulated newspaper at that time) reporting of the incident itself. At the time, John Maxwell also published some articles (some with firsthand accounts) in Public Opinion. I had read about Coral Gardens in these venues, but realized that nowhere was there a full account, and that because of this the events of 1963 had largely been silenced from the general story of Jamaica's history, particularly in the immediate post-independence years. Another such silenced historical moment, by the way, is the Green Bay Massacre, and Storm Saulter has recently released an excellent film based on that event in 1978.

The incident on which your film focuses took place in 1963. Why do you think that in the half-century or so since that time such little information about this event in Jamaican history has been available?

I am not sure. That the government and security forces would have had such an alarmingly violent response to the actions of five individuals is stunning though of course, we have to understand this in relation to the climate of extreme fear of anything having to do with black consciousness at the time. I'm sure the excessive response constitutes an embarrassment on the part of the government, but times are different now and people are ready to bring these sorts of violent legacies to the fore. Additionally, around the world there is a very limited understanding of the various brutalities and struggles earlier generations of Rastafari faced, given that many outside the Caribbean who come to Rasta do so because of the music and know relatively little about the social and political context of Jamaica during that period.



John L. Jackson

How many people died on Bad Friday, and was anyone ever charged and tried for these deaths?

By the end of the day 11 April 1963, at least eight people had been killed, including Rudolph Franklin and two of his crew. Three men were hunted down and arrested for murder and conspiracy to commit murder – Carlton Bowen, Clifton Larman and Leabert Jarrett. Their lawyers – Mssrs. Beresford Hay, David Muirhead, Carl Rattray, and Hewart Henriques – argued a defense of “diminished responsibility.” All three men were sentenced

to death by hanging. In May 1964, Jarrett was released on appeal, but Bowen and Larman were hanged on 2 December 1964. It is still not known exactly how many Rastafari were rounded up by the police, jailed, tortured, or killed.

What is your professional background, and how did it prepare you to make this film?

I am an anthropology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and in my life before graduate school, I was a professional dancer in New York City. I don't have a professional background in film, obviously, though my husband John Jackson, who is the co-director for the film does, so this is why we thought we could tell this story in that way. Junior Wedderburn and I did most of the camera work and the interviewing, with the help of many Rastafari involved with the Coral Gardens Committee (especially Junior “Ista J” Manning, when he was still living, and Ras Simba and Ras Iyah V). Junior, John and I sat together to think through how we wanted to tell the story and who the primary audience should be, and Junior also created the music for the film, working with a number of excellent musicians in

Brooklyn.

Of all the subjects you could have had as the focus of your documentary, why the Coral Gardens Incident?

I was working on a book about violence in Jamaica, that has actually just been released. It's called EXCEPTIONAL VIOLENCE: EMBODIED CITIZENSHIP IN TRANSNATIONAL JAMAICA. The last chapter of that book concerns the Coral Gardens "incident" as I wanted to talk about the history of state violence against Rastafari and how this violence was geared in part toward solidifying a particular idea about citizenship that Rastafari countered. As I was doing the research for the chapter, one of the elders with whom Junior Wedderburn and I had been talking suggested that it might be more useful to make a film about it, so we did.

Where did you get funding to make the film?

The University of Pennsylvania has provided all the funding for the film, which has been incredibly helpful, obviously, as all the trips back and forth and the archival footage we use, as well as our own time and energy (which has been uncompensated), have ended up costing quite a bit. The good thing is that because we've been supported by the university to make the film, we are now not concerned with recovering all these costs through sales of the film. Instead, we are able to donate all of the proceeds from the film to the Rastafari Coral Gardens Committee, and indeed this was part of our agreement with the community all along. Right now, we are in the final stages of creating the cover design for the DVD and making copies so that we can bring them some boxes to sell in Jamaica. The film will also be available on our [website](#): (it is still, currently, in construction).

What was one of the best decisions you made regarding how to develop this film project?

I think our decision about audience has been important. We went back and forth about the kind of documentary it should and could be, and how it could reach the broadest audience, and we ended up deciding that the community itself – both within and beyond Jamaica – should be primary. The secondary audience, which of course overlaps with the community, comprises those interested in issues related to Pan-Africanism, Rastafari, black consciousness, and Jamaica. We know there are communities of Rastafari or like-minded individuals who will be interested and who will look for the film all over the world. We also feel that Jamaicans generally should see it, both on the rock and abroad, in order to have a better sense of our post-independence history.



Junior "Gabu" Wedderburn

What was the biggest challenge you faced while making Bad Friday?

Because Rastafari have been so over-exploited in terms of their imagery and iconography, and because they have also been mis-represented on numerous occasions, or mistreated by researchers, cultural workers, or filmmakers, or not given what was promised to them, there is a fair amount of skepticism among leaders within the community about any project like this (though in our experience, this skepticism did not extend to the elders themselves). We were fortunate to have the support of key individuals

who were part of some of the current initiatives within the community, like the move to secure some degree of intellectual copyright protection and to protect their

interests vis-à-vis the mobilization of their image in tourism advertising, etc. This meant that while we were in some ways taken as a test case for these initiatives, we were also, for the most part, trusted as to our sincerity. A big plus in this regard is that we ourselves are not trying to make money off the film, but instead see it as a gift to Jamaica and to the worldwide community of Rastafari.

If you could spend an afternoon interviewing anyone who has passed away but was involved in the Coral Gardens Incident, who would that be and why?

There is a sistren who was one of the only women arrested during the aftermath of Coral Gardens with whom I would love to have spoken; and there is another brethren who was involved and who was mentioned by several of the elders and others close to the situation, who has since passed. A number of policemen who were part of the original battalion who responded to the events of that morning have also passed, and it would have been interesting, I think, to see whether they were willing to rethink what happened on those days. A few of the elders who we did have the privilege of interviewing have also transitioned since, so we were happy to have been able to record their stories so that others may hear them. Thankfully, the Public Defender is now investigating the case, in part because of the film but also as a result of the long-standing agitation of members of the community. He has asked for our raw interview footage (which we gave him) and members of his office have already traveled to MoBay to take sworn testimony from individuals who went through the experience. I know that he is also asking that if anyone beyond western Jamaica or even outside Jamaica can talk about their own experiences in relation to the events at Coral Gardens, they should contact his office, by [email](#) or by calling 876-922-7109 or 876-922-8256.

If you had an unlimited budget to make any one film, what would it be about?

This was it, really. As I am not a filmmaker per se, I don't lie awake thinking about the next one. However, if something arose as organically as this did and it seemed to make sense in terms of what it could do to support the efforts of those I am working with, I might think about doing it again.

How can people purchase the film or get more information about it?

The film is being distributed to institutions (educational and otherwise) in the U.S. and Canada by [Third World Newsreel](#) and individuals can buy it from our [website](#) within the next few weeks! The soundtrack from the film will also be available from both sources, and will feature a couple of extra tracks.

About the Interviewer:

Andrea Shaw, Ph.D., is assistant director of the Division of Humanities and an assistant professor of English at Nova Southeastern University in Ft. Lauderdale. She was born in Jamaica and is a creative writer and a scholar of Caribbean and African Diaspora studies. Her book, [The Embodiment of Disobedience: Fat Black Women's Unruly Political Bodies](#), was published in 2006. Her creative and scholarly writing have been published in numerous journals, including *World Literature Today*, *MaComère*, *The Caribbean Writer*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Feminist Media Studies*, *Social Semiotics*, and *FEMSPEC*. She graduated from the University of Miami with a Ph.D. in English and from Florida International University with an M.F.A in Creative Writing.

NOTE: "Bad Friday-Rastafari After Coral Gardens makes its New York premiere at the multi-media, family friendly, Reggae Culture Salute 2011 on Saturday, Nov. 5th. The event honors the 81st anniversary of the coronation of HIM Emperor Haile Selassie I and Empress Menen of Ethiopia with a salute to the unique relationship between reggae, rasta, Selassie and Jamaica. The event which features Big Youth, Dubtonic Kru, IWayne and others benefits the Coalition to Preserve Reggae Music, Inc. (CPR) a 501 (c) (3) organization. Email info@cprreggae.org or call 718 421 6927 for further information."