

Tjenbé Réd!



***“Love, peace, unity
and homophobia”
- Arte deals with murder music***

***(According to the Franco-German TV station,
“to think of these lyrics as forming part
of Jamaican culture is to misunderstand
the human rights, because the philosophy
preached by Reggae is something
quite different”)***

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Arte/ Tracks (the magazine for music and cultures on the move)/ Friday 19th September/ Special edition on virility/ On the menu, men, truths. But these days, my poor lady, how do you get on? Between tattooed monsters and fashionable metrosexuals, Tracks traces modern today’s male pop music [...]./ Love, peace, unity and homophobia/ In Jamaica, where homosexuality is punishable by prison, dance halls are sizzling with homophobic refrains, while attacks on gays multiply. Research into the local stars - Beenie Man, Gentleman, Tanya Stephens and Sizzla [...]

<http://www.arte.tv/fr/2100166.html>

http://www.gayclic.com/articles/tracks_1_homophobie_en_jamaique.html

0’00 - Reporter - Poland, Russia, Iran, Nigeria - the list of countries opposed to homosexuals is long. In Jamaica, for example, there is a long way to go. Homosexuality is forbidden by law and violence against homosexuals is tolerated by society. A reality perfectly reflected in the popular music of Jamaica. Some lyrics openly incited the murder of homosexuals. Dennis Carney, originally from Jamaica, lives in London. He fights for gay rights. [On screen - Two men are kissing. Images of Jamaica. A young black child passes along a street of the ghetto, past a wall with a graffiti: “David was killed for no reason”. Dennis Carney is walking through the streets of London and then is sitting at home. Legend on screen - Dennis Carney - Black Gay Men’s Advisory Group]

0’26 - Dennis Carney - There is numerous cases of lesbians and gays dying following attacks. Their attackers sing these songs while beating their victims.

*0’41 - Reporter - Since 2004, several organisations such as *Outrage!* have been running the *Stop Murder Music* campaign against lyrics which incite violence. The most homophobic Jamaican musicians are Sizzla, Beenie Man, Bounty Killer and Elephant Man. There is nothing metaphorical about their remarks, nor have they anything to do with the way they speak in the ghetto. So several concerts have been banned. [On the screen - Clip of Sizzla (?) - Cards showing lyrics by Beenie Man, Bounty Killer, Buju Banton and Elephant Man: “Come and execute all the gays...Burn a fire upon mister fagoty...Boom Bye-Bye in a Batty Boy Head... Battyman fi dead! Gimme tha tech-nine/ Shoot dem like bird...”]*

1'04 - *Dennis Carney* - I think it is a great success for this campaign. I feel that these artists do not have the right to perform this type of song on stage. If an artist were to say: *"We need to kill and lynch all the Blacks... or all the Whites"*, he would certainly be banned.

1'24 - *Reporter* - In 2007, prompted by *Outrage!*, several dancehall artists signed the Reggae Compassionate Act, a document in which they committed themselves not to spread homophobic propositions any longer. But Beenie Man and Sizzla did not always respect the committed they had nevertheless signed up to. Their concerts are regularly refused. Recently, Sizzla has even seen himself being refused entry to the territory of the European Union. This has not prevented, Gentleman, the German Reggae musician, from recording, with Sizzla, his song *"Lack of Love"*. [On screen - A clip of Beenie Man: *"Product of the Ghetto"*.]

1'56 - *Gentleman* - *"Lack of Love"* that quite simply means that society needs more respect, more love... and more understanding. Sizzla is a very accessible guy, contrary what you would think. I am truly a fan. His music has inspired me for years. Even though when he goes off into one of those rants, which I don't agree with. As far as I am concerned, in my albums I am always on the side of minorities. Someone like Sizzla knows that with certain lyrics he would not be welcome in my albums. That is why the song is called *"Lack of Love"* - it is call for cooperation. [On the screen - A clip of Gentleman and Sizzla: *"Lack of Love"* - Gentleman in the streets of Jamaica.]

2'40 - *Reporter* - Some people would see in this a way of supporting those who preach violence. Gentleman tries to move things along smoothly, without going for direct confrontation. On the other side, here is Tanya Stephens. In her songs she launches a bitter attack on discrimination against homosexuals. [On screen - Tanya Stephens (on stage, singing *"Do You Still Care?"*) - *He was saved by a car with a "Gay Pride" sticker. A bullet in his head, he would have stayed there... Saved by those you wanted to kill! Does the way they dress still make you mad? Would you have preferred that they left you to die?*]

3'16 - *Tanya Stephens (to the Reporter)* - Before the album came out, the critics said to me: *"No doubt you intend to leave Jamaica, when they hear what you are singing?"* I found that surprising. That is not the Jamaica I know. I live in Jamaica and I know this country well. I've got gay friends who live in Jamaica. There are tons of gays in Jamaica and they have not been attacked. People come to see me in the ghetto to tell me: *"I have never seen things like that. I'm glad you have opened my eyes"*. They understand that these are men like other people and they accept it.

3'46 - *Tanya Stephens (on stage, singing)* - *There, where Bigga grew up, the boys are hard cases and collect girls. When brought tears to your eyes, your mother told you: "Don't snivel like a girl! Real boys don't cry!"*

4'00 - *Tanya Stephens (to the journalist)* - I am convinced that men in Jamaica are brought up like machomen. The sort that lack sensitivity, who always have to parade their virility. That's why their mental structure can't accommodate homosexuality, especially among men. It's quite funny, lesbians are accepted. But in reality, there are homosexuals and heterosexuals ... and at the end of the day, we are all the same!

4'38 - *Reporter* - In the ghetto, many live in misery. For these outcasts, manly virility is often the only way allowed to them to establish their presence. Ever since colonial times, slaves had to produce a large number of children. Those who did not were thought of as petty, or as homosexuals. Today, Jamaican preachers continue to state that homosexuality is a sin. [On screen - Old Jamaican ladies, Jamaican sugar cane cutters, scenes of gospel choirs.]

5'00 - *Tanya Stephens (to the Reporter)* - It's the Church which started homophobia. That's obvious, when you read the story of Lot in the Bible. Lot's family lived in Sodom and Gomorrah. The passage relates that angels came to visit Lot's family. The men of the town wanted to go to sleep with these male angels. But Lot said to them: "*Don't sleep with these men, I'll give you my daughters*". The men replied: "*No. We don't want your daughters, we want these men*". Then God destroyed the town by fire. It is the most homophobic story I know, and the most violent.

5'33 - *Reporter* - It is these texts from the Old Testament that the most violent Rastas, like Sizzla, justify their hostility to homosexuals. When a religion legitimates violence, it's better to put it back in its place. Currently, things seem to be evolving. [On screen - The black and mixed race population in the streets of Jamaica.]

5'58 - *Dennis Carney* - I think the debate has already started. When I was in Jamaica four years ago, the newspapers were talking about it every day. We are beginning to see positive effects in Jamaica. The police crack down on abusive language and attacks against lesbians and gays, which was unthinkable previously. [On screen - White tourists with dreadlocks buying clothes in Jamaican markets.]

6'25 - *Reporter* - Without being able to understand Jamaican Reggae, many Reggae and Dancehall fans are not aware of the homophobic character of certain lyrics. To think of these lyrics as forming part of Jamaican culture is to misunderstand the rights of man. For the philosophy preached by Reggae is something quite different. [On screen - Gentleman's concert in Jamaica.]

6'48 - *Gentleman* - Minorities ought to be defended, not persecuted. That is fundamental in Reggae. Listen to the lyrics of Bob Marley. Reggae objects to the system in which you are more or less obliged to live. Take "*I Shot The Sheriff*", for example. It is a song that the middle classes and rich folk chant all the time. And everybody says that Bob Marley is a great pacifist. We need to look again at what our parents, teachers and priests drummed into us... and that is something I learned from the Rastas. [On screen - Clip of Gentleman: "*Different Places*"] - 07'32

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