

**THE STOP MURDER MUSIC CAMPAIGN:  
CULTURAL REGULATION OF JAMAICAN DANCEHALL MUSIC**

**By: Enio Chiola**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Stop Murder Music campaign's primary objective is to eradicate and silence Jamaican dancehall artists who incite the killing of homosexuals. This thesis problematizes the methods and motivations of the Stop Murder Music campaign by suggesting that their analysis of homophobic lyrics, separate from the music they accompany, falls short in espousing all the complexities inherent in the Jamaican dancehall genre. My research considers three significant factors that relate to the social processes of homophobic dancehall music: i) the cultural context of the production of Jamaican dancehall music; ii) the methods of the Stop Murder Music campaign; and iii) the motivations of the Stop Murder Music campaign. I argue that the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign's neglect to understand how music functions in a more holistic sense creates inconsistencies in their stance against Jamaican dancehall music, which results in overstated dangers to Canadian queer individuals.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ABSTRACT	pg. iv
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	pg. 3
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	pg. 11
I.    Culture and Cultural Production	pg. 13
II.   Music and Cultural (Re)production	pg. 17
III.  Violence in Music and the Ensuing Moral Panic	pg. 25
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	pg. 31
CHAPTER 4: STOP MURDER MUSIC (CANADA) – OVERVIEW	pg. 43
CHAPTER 5: TAKING CULTURAL AND MUSICAL CONTEXT INTO CONSIDERATION	pg. 59
CHAPTER 6: THE METHODS OF THE CAMPAIGN AND THE TROUBLE WITH DANCEHALL	pg. 73
CHAPTER 7: THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE CAMPAIGN	pg. 96
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	pg. 111
WORKS CITED	pg. 114
DISCOGRAPHY	pg. 122

## **CD TRACKLISTING**

1. Me'Shell NdegéOcello – “Soul on Ice”
2. Vanessa Carlton – “1000 Miles”
3. Feist – “I Feel it All”
4. Deftones – “Minerva”

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I was introduced to the debate which surrounds the violently homophobic lyrics in Jamaican dancehall music in a transnational sexualities graduate course. This music has been under intense scrutiny by the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign—a campaign which is devoted to silencing Jamaican dancehall music that advocates the killing of homosexuals. I researched the Jamaican patois lyrics of many artists targeted by the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign, including: Buju Banton, Sizzla, Elephant Man, Beenie Man, Bounty Killer, and Capleton. The intensity of violence towards homosexuals in the lyric content of certain Jamaican dancehall songs is striking and abrasive. In Beenie Man’s song “Batty Man Fi Dead” the translated lyrics exclaim: “All faggots must be killed/if you fuck arse then you get copper and lead/No man must have another man in his bed” (Outrage! *Dancehall Dossier*).<sup>1</sup> Other examples of the incitement to violence include Bounty Killer’s song “Look Good” in which he sings: “I’m ready to wipe out this faggot with a pure laser beam” (ibid); or Capleton’s song “Give Har” which proclaims: “You should know that Capleton burns queers/The same fire applies to lesbians/Say, I burn everything as long as I know that they’re gay/All queers and sodomites should be killed” (ibid).<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the abrasive homophobic lyrics, British queer activist Peter Tatchell founded the Stop Murder Music campaign, which ignited a full-fledged revolt against this Jamaican dancehall music, which advocated the killing of homosexuals. The campaign’s

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<sup>1</sup> It must be mentioned that the only source for the lyrics I am using in this paper are provided by the ‘Stop Murder Music’ campaign. I do not have my own personal translations of the lyrics to which to compare the campaign’s translations. Instead, I rely on Caribbean theorists, such as Carolyn Cooper (1994; 2004) and Joseph T. Farquharson (2005) in offering a counter-translation.

<sup>2</sup> I cite the Outrage! publication *Dancehall Dossier* here specifically because these are their translated lyrics of Dancehall songs, which should not be mistaken as coming from the artists who wrote the songs in Jamaican patois. It is these translations that are highly contestable and one of the focuses of this paper.

principle objective is to have these dancehall songs silenced internationally (Adé Larcher 2007a). They believe that silencing the homophobia in this music will inevitably change (for the better) how queer individuals are treated within Jamaican music culture, and the overall Jamaican culture at large. Tatchell, quoted in Cooper, explains:

We did it to Guns and Roses and to Marky Mark in the 90s and now we are saying to these dancehall artistes and producers if they refuse to desist [*sic*] inciting violence against lesbians and gays they will suffer the consequences. Everytime [*sic*] a concert is announced our aim will be to get it cancelled until these artists comply.... We want to drive homophobia out of dancehall music and to make life safe for lesbian and gay people. It's wrong that anyone should incite violence against another human being. We'd like to see Jamaican music reclaimed for Bob Marley's spirit and peace and brotherhood. (in Cooper 2004, 74–75)

In direct opposition to the campaign and its objectives is Carolyn Cooper, a Caribbean Studies theorist who expresses disdain towards the Stop Murder Music (SMM) campaign for its condemnation and vilification of Jamaican dancehall artists and their music (Cooper 2004). In my research I found very little written which directly analyzes the Stop Murder Music campaign.<sup>3</sup> There are some authors who discuss the production and process of forming gender and sexual identities as it relates to Jamaican dancehall music, but these theorists do not grapple specifically with the Stop Murder Music

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<sup>3</sup> Since the inception of my writing of this thesis there have been fewer than a handful of articles published which refers to the Stop Murder Music campaign (e.g., Lewis and Carr 2009; Wahab and Plaza 2009). For reasons regarding timing and deadlines, I have not been able to offer a proper analysis of these works in my thesis, but they are discussed briefly in Chapter 6 of this thesis.

campaign. Those that speak of the campaign, do so briefly and usually in combination with their response to Carolyn Cooper.

As it stands, Cooper is one of the few academic sources who criticizes the Stop Murder Music campaign. She accuses the campaign of neglecting to consider the cultural context and intent of the music (1994, 444–446). She argues that the campaign is unjustifiably attributing Westernized moral and cultural ethics to a Jamaican musical subculture that is not subject to, or engrossed by, these same ethics (ibid). Cooper argues:

culture specific discursive strategies that function to “mask” meaning may, in practice, not be acknowledged as legitimate. There is a presumption of a “universal” (English) language of transparent meaning. The cultural arrogance of the new politically correct liberals is thus no different in kind from the cultural arrogance of old world imperialists who knew that Europe was the centre of the world and “far out” territories were just waiting to be discovered. Xenophobia is no less a phobia than homophobia. But all phobias are not created equal. Some (hetero)-phobias are more politically correct than others....[G]iven the historical context of dislocating politics of euro-american imperialism in the region, ‘hard-core’ Jamaican cultural nationalists are likely to resist any re-examination of indigenous values that is perceived as imposed on them by their imperial neighbour in the North. In the rhetoric of the lyrical gun, this heterophobic [*sic*], neo-imperialist offensive may back-fire. (Cooper 1994, 445)

Ultimately, Cooper understands this attack on a Jamaican cultural export as fruitless in its attempt to lessen the degree of homophobia within.

The campaign and its forebearers argue that the music is a form of hate speech against queer individuals in Canada. They believe the music should be silenced in Canada because its circulation infringes upon Canadian human rights laws (Adé Larcher 2007a). In a letter to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Stop Murder Music (Canada) leader Akim Adé Larcher wrote:

[I]ncitement of violence and murder offends Canadian law and values. In particular [...] Sections 318 and 319 of the *Criminal Code* [...] make it a criminal offence to advocate killing members of a group based on their sexual orientation. In addition, Section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* prohibits communication of messages that are likely to expose a person to hatred on the basis of their sexual orientation. (2007b, italics in original)

The counter-debate, espoused mainly by Cooper, argues that the attack on dancehall music<sup>4</sup> misinterprets the intention of the artists (2004, 74–75; 1994, 444–446). She argues that there is a lack of analysis regarding the cultural specificity from which the music originates and this attempt at cross-cultural regulation is a form of Western cultural imperialism (ibid).<sup>5</sup>

What SMM neglects to acknowledge in their pursuit to silence Jamaican dancehall music is how an analysis of ideological statements within lyrics may fall short without an understanding of how music functions as a complex whole. Moreover, one

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<sup>4</sup> Throughout this thesis I will often refer to the targeted music as ‘dancehall music’ and will not always qualify it with ‘the targeted homophobic dancehall music.’ I ask the reader to be aware that the campaign is not attacking the entirety of the dancehall genre, only the songs and artists that incite violence towards homosexuals.

<sup>5</sup> By cultural imperialism I refer to the troubling concept of powerhouse nations forcing ‘othered’ societies to adhere to their cultural value system (Roach 1997; Said 1993; Schiller 1976).



should also consider the cultural context of the music's production and reception. The cultural setting from which music emerges is vital to understand why the music possesses the characteristics that it does and vice versa (Shuker 1994, 33–34).

I propose to problematize the methods and motivations of the Stop Murder Music campaign by suggesting that their analysis of homophobic lyrics, separate from the music they accompany, falls short in espousing all the complexities inherent in the Jamaican dancehall genre. However, although I do not offer a proper musicological analysis of Jamaican dancehall music myself, this lack does not necessarily preclude my claim that the SMM campaign falls short in their limited analysis of the music. In highlighting some of the problems of the SMM campaign, my research considers three significant factors that relate to the social processes of homophobic dancehall music: i) the cultural context of the production of Jamaican dancehall music; ii) the methods of the Stop Murder Music campaign; and iii) the motivations of the Stop Murder Music campaign. I argue that the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign's neglect to understand how music functions in a more holistic sense creates inconsistencies in their stance against Jamaican dancehall music. This neglect results in overstated dangers to Canadian queer individuals as well as utilizing ineffective strategic methods to silence and ban the music from Canadian distribution.

In researching the campaign, I found myself vacillating on the theoretical fence, agreeing and disagreeing with certain aspects of the campaign's arguments. Postcolonial and poststructuralist theory warns against speaking for, or interpreting, other cultures in such a way as to impose one's specific cultural and juridical understandings of sex, gender, and race onto another culture—another culture that may organize and interpret

these identity markers in different ways (Butler 2004, 40–50; Alexander 2005, 21–29). In order to avoid these pitfalls that poststructuralists warn against, I feel it is necessary to take the cross-cultural complexities and contextual specifications of Jamaican dancehall music into consideration.

Despite the above-mentioned admonitions of postcolonial and poststructuralist theory, these caveats should not imply that Canadian queers must passively accept all external cultural imports—especially those that could potentially demean socio-political movements and progressions of queer subject identities and civil rights in the name of political/cultural sensitivity. However, in contrast it would not be wise to advocate a knee-jerk reaction to this particular genre of music or any non-local cultural art/entertainment product. In researching the SMM campaign, I am also trying to understand how can one be sensitive to foreign cultural production without conflicting with one's principles of human rights?

Growing up queer in Canada, I have strong principles of anti-racism and anti-homophobia. In researching the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign my ideas have been intensely challenged. In siding with the actions of the campaign that combat international homophobia, I feel an underlying degree of racism in myself. However, if I believe that Jamaican dancehall artists have the right to express what they wish regarding homosexuality, I feel hypocritical towards my anti-homophobia principles. In light of this tension I feel between racism and homophobia, this paper attempts to avoid being, as M. Jacqui Alexander states, “one-sidedly oppositional” (2005, 6). In other words, I do not want to favour one position over the other, but rather illuminate the inconsistencies in the Stop Murder Music campaign's approach to contesting homophobic Jamaican dancehall

music.

It is necessary (and responsible) to disclose my subjective position in this discussion. This disclosure does not excuse my arguments, which may be read as culturally insensitive or misinformed, but might illuminate the origins of the claims I make. I am a Canadian-born, white, queer male of Italian descent with strong cultural ties to my Italian ancestry, as well as my Canadian upbringing. I have been raised in a society that has seen considerable progress in relation to queer rights. I do not mean to say that all queer-diaspora groups conform to legal protocols established by predominantly white, middle- to upper-class homosexuals in Canada. Rather, I am presenting my personal political affiliations and declaring that I support Canadian legislative queer rights.<sup>6</sup> However, my personal affiliation to Canadian judicial notions of socio-political rights is only in the most locally specific sense. I do not consider this Canadian institutional form of queer rights ‘progression’<sup>7</sup> to be a ‘universal’ form that needs to be accepted and implemented by other nations and cultures, as other nations and cultures may understand sexuality in a way that does not suit the Canadian form of sexual rights progression. I recognize that cross-cultural implementations of ‘Westernized’ queer identities can create chasms and dissonances between social groups. This recognition is the reason why I am intrigued by the diversity of ‘queer’<sup>8</sup> sexualities, behaviours and identities that do not mimic or parallel popular notions of Euro-North American queerness. These potential

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<sup>6</sup> Some of the Canadian legislative queer rights that I support include: marital rights, legal prohibitions on publishing and producing hate speech against queers and discriminating against individuals on grounds of sexual preference, gender identity, and/or sexual/gender practices

<sup>7</sup> Progression in this sense is meant as something previously not afforded to queers that now is. These rights being offered to queers can be seen as progression only in the sense that prior to their implementation certain queers felt restricted and confined, but now experience a degree of equality.

<sup>8</sup> I use the term ‘queer’ to delineate any forms of gender behaviour or sexual behaviour that is not neatly defined by heterosexuality or heteronormativity—I do not equate ‘queer’ in this sense to determine a specific lifestyle or identity that is adopted by transnational peoples. It is used here as a form of clarification and simplified communication, despite all its problems.

chasms and dissonances that can occur when Westernized methods of queer identity and progress are forcibly implemented on other cultures is why it is necessary to negotiate the locally specific import of Jamaican dancehall music, read as violently homophobic, with the political affiliations of Western progressive queer rights. This work does not seek to impose socio-political beliefs onto how Jamaican dancehall music is taken up in Jamaica as this is beyond the scope of this study.

I begin my discussion of the findings with a brief examination of the successes and aims of the international Stop Murder Music campaign before focusing on the accomplishments of the Canadian chapter. I then begin to grapple with the cultural implications, meanings and interpretations of Jamaican dancehall lyrics, and how homophobia is used as a means of conveying a sense of hypermasculinized heterosexuality in the music. I then turn to the strategic use of how the campaign highlights the violence in Jamaican dancehall lyrics as a means to initiate a moral panic outrage. An examination of the underlying motivations of the campaign follow, accented by a brief discussion of what Puar deems the ascendancy of whiteness through sexual exceptionalism (Puar 2007).<sup>9</sup> Within this examination I question both the campaign's need to act against the artists and the seriousness of the threat that the music actually poses for Canadian queers. I conclude with an attempt to negotiate these polemic issues, while I hope, showing respect for cultural specificities and principles without major internal self-contradiction.

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<sup>9</sup> My discussion of Puar's notion of sexual exceptionalism and the ascendancy of whiteness is offered more as a possible explanation for the tactics employed by the Stop Murder Music campaign.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

When researching the Stop Murder Music campaign, it became painfully obvious that there was not a substantial amount of academic literature which directly discussed the Stop Murder Music campaign. Most authors, including Alleyne (2006), Bakare-Yusuf (2006), Hope (2006a; 2006b), Lesser (2008), Pinnock (2007), Saunders (2003), and Farquharson (2005), have all done great work on sexuality, gender and Jamaican dancehall music, but none speak at length about the Stop Murder Music campaign.

The Stop Murder Music campaign is usually referenced in the above authors' work as an aside or result of the inherent homophobia and hyper-masculinity in dancehall music. For this reason, this research focuses predominantly on the work of Carolyn Cooper (2004; 1994), one of the few authors who tackles the Stop Murder Music campaign head on. Cooper, among others who examine sexuality and gender in relation to dancehall music, is discussed in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, as opposed to the literature review. I structured this literature review in this way for three reasons: a) the literature I refer to in this chapter is the ballast which supports my overall thesis argument; b) examining Cooper in this section would only duplicate itself in the discussion of the thesis, as her work is central to my argument; c) my thesis does not purport to offer fully developed arguments about sexuality in relation to Jamaican dancehall music. My work is focused on the Stop Murder Music campaign and its neglect to consider how music functions as a complex whole. Although sexuality plays a specific role in the overall discourse surrounding the Stop Murder Music campaign, a proper discussion of the workings of sexuality within Jamaican dancehall music goes beyond the scope of this research. Therefore, the absence of examining what the academic field is

saying about sexuality and Jamaican dancehall music was purposeful. Instead of a discussion on the academic literature about the SMM campaign, Chapter 4 goes into detail about the overview of the campaign, its methods, successes, and motivations, as it has been relayed through secondary print sources.

The authors I mention above are referenced in support of my criticism against some of Cooper's arguments regarding the metaphorical meanings in dancehall lyrics, but mainly to offer a more concise picture as to how heterosexual masculinity functions and operates in Jamaican dancehall music. I do not rely on these authors as offering insight into the tactics and motivations of the campaign as to do so would go beyond the scope of the authors' work. Additionally, since I have completed the research portion of this thesis, less than a handful of articles have emerged which touch briefly on the Stop Murder Music campaign. Work by Lewis and Carr (2009) and Wahab and Plaza (2009) both discuss gender and sexuality within Jamaica and the Jamaican diaspora (respectively), while touching upon the Stop Murder Music campaign and its effects on sexual subjects in Jamaica. Unfortunately, I do not elaborate on these authors' work in this literature review, but do refer to them occasionally in the body of the discussion.

Additionally, I have chosen to include only a brief discussion on the meanings and interpretations of the lyrics which are contested by the campaign. I have made this decision for a few reasons. First, I am unfamiliar with the Jamaican patois dialect and as such, am not fit to assess what a proper translation of the lyrics looks like. It would be irresponsible of me to either a) offer my own interpretation of the lyrics in an authoritative manner; or b) pass judgment as to which translation is more accurate—that of the campaign, or that of Caribbean linguistics and theorists who attempt to explain the

nuances embedded in some of the lyrics' terms. I have purposefully avoided a thorough discussion on the merits and accuracies of interpretations of terms or lyrics frequently found in dancehall songs because to do so would miss the central argument of my thesis. Ultimately, I argue that music is a complex social product that has many considerations and cannot should, whenever possible, be understood in a more holistic sense—in this case, the lyrics. Although the lyrics play a vital role in how dancehall is received by listeners and the campaign, it is only one particular aspect of the overall discussion of the music. Consequently, I examine the interpretations of the lyrics in the discussion portion of this thesis in the hope of highlighting the discourse that surrounds the contentious terms, and not to offer a decisive argument as to the interpretations' merits as they are used in the campaign.

This literature review is divided into three main subsets for my research. The first section examines the culture and cultural production. The second section narrows the focus of cultural production to music and how music is understood as a product of culture, driven by individuals but guided by the culture in which it originates. The third section examines the nature of violence in music and how music incites and arouses violent behaviours in its listeners. Each section in this literature review helps to elucidate my central thesis argument.

## I. CULTURE AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

At the core of analyzing the SMM campaign and its response to Jamaican dancehall music is the necessity to delineate how culture is understood in this research. Keesing's work (1974) on cultural analysis is useful in helping to understand how the

individual is influenced by his/her culture in his/her own production of it. He determines that at the core of cultural analysis is the paradox between understanding the interrelatedness of society and culture. He states:

When individuals engaging in social relations—even if there are only two of them—share common meanings, common understandings of one another’s acts, then these shared meaning are greater than the sum of their “parts,” their realizations in individual minds. Social meanings transcend, by some mysterious alchemy of minds meeting, the individuation of private experience. Social thinkers have struggled with this paradox for decades, even for centuries; yet *consciences collectives* still confound analytical dissection. (Keesing 1974, 84, italics in original)

This paradox remains at the core of the expanding cultural studies discipline (Keesing 1974). What precisely determines this shared ‘consciences collectives’ within particular sections and segments of the social world? In attempting to answer the complexities of this paradox, Keesing turns to Goodenough’s theory that culture is “an idealized systematization of an individual cognitive world, one that could enable an outsider to produce culturally appropriate responses in the range of social situations....Thus what is shared is reduced to an idealized individual actor’s point of view” (1974, 84).

Goodenough attributes the locus of culture in the individual, as culture is learned by individuals and thus perpetuated by them. Keesing’s elaborations of Goodenough’s theory of the cognitive model sees culture:

conceived as a system of competence shared in its broad design and deeper principles, and varying between individuals in its specificities....[Culture



is thus] not all of what an individual knows and thinks and feels about his world. It is his *theory of what his fellows know, believe, and mean*, his theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society into which he was born. (1974, 89)

Keesing is also careful to note that these idealized meanings of “the code” of behaviour is largely unconscious. He continues by stating that culture is “an ideational subsystem within a vastly complex system, biological, social and symbolic, [which grounds] our abstract models in the concrete particularities of human social life.” (1974, 94) Actors in the ideational subsystem of culture understand and perceive culture in very different ways. Culture, for Keesing, becomes the historical stage on which actors base decisions for interpersonal actions. Understanding the ideational subsystem as a system of shared competence for what an individual believes “his fellows know” can account for the growth of certain subcultures that counter or interact with a larger cultural system in that an individual can choose to defy what he believes “his fellows know” (Keesing 1974). This defiance can then lend way to the growth of a subculture, which as Hebdige argues is largely a subversion of the larger parent culture (1979).

The existence of subcultures raises an interesting question about the fluidity of culture itself. It is undeniable that culture is in a state of constant flux and change across temporal and spatial intervals. Keesing determines that the fluidity of culture is an adaptive necessity based on a variety of individuals’ actions. Therefore culture is susceptible to change based on the behaviour the actors within the culture who proceed with what they believe to be in their best interest (Keesing 1974).

The understanding of culture as a continuous flow of changing shared behaviours requires some further investigation. Swidler argues that culture is a tripartite process involving: (1) A 'tool-kit' of shared historical meanings, symbols and stories invoked in different ways to solve problems; (2) Ways in which people organize actions, known as 'strategies of action'; (3) The means of invoking culture as a component in ordering 'strategies'<sup>10</sup> of action', not as a means for a desired end result (Swidler 1998 (1986), 172). For Swidler, culture is shaped through how action is organized. She continues:

People ... cannot build up a sequence of actions piece by piece, striving with each act to maximize a given outcome. Action is necessarily integrated into larger assemblages, called here "strategies of action."

Culture has an independent causal role because it shapes the capacities from which such strategies of action are constructed. (Swidler 1998 (1986), 175)

Swidler's theory determines that culture is the invocation of determining meaning in action. Culture is not produced for the sheer purpose of producing culture, but rather as an assemblage of meanings in action that determine new meaning in newly produced cultural units. In other words, culture is the unintended by-product of a collection of actions across social groups. Culture is the aggregate that people turn to in order to understand meaning in their own actions and the actions of those in their direct cultural surroundings.

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<sup>10</sup> Strategy is not understood as a conscious plan of action, but rather a loose guideline (Swidler 1998 (1986) 172).

## II. MUSIC AND CULTURAL (RE)PRODUCTION

The production of music is influenced by the musician's culture. This section discusses DeNora's account of the musical event and how the musical event comes to inform the listener of the social milieu. I then briefly examine Small and his conception of musicking as an action in which the listener, performer and composer engage in. I then turn to Hebdige who discusses the significance of semiotics and music in the development of subcultures. Finally, I discuss Shuker who purports that music is not easily reducible to its singular components.

DeNora notes that music helps formulate the subjects' understanding of social and cultural processes (2003, 57). Music acts as a guide in directing behaviour and comprehension of social settings. For those individual's who engage in producing music, their musical product becomes part of the aggregated cultural whole of which they are apart. Shuker notes that those who make music "exercise varying degrees of autonomy, but this is always circumscribed by the available technologies and expertise, by economics, and by the expectations of their audience" (1994, 99). Music, both guides the listener in understanding social processes and settings and unintentionally forms subcultural meaning (Shuker 1994, 237–238). Music is simultaneously influenced by and integrated into the culture through which it emerges.

One of the foremost musicological thinkers of the twentieth century is Theodor Adorno. Adorno's contribution to musicology was tempered with his artistic commitments to progressive modernism. In spite of his monumental impact on our understandings of, for example, late Beethoven or the Second Viennese School, his artistic commitments led him to some uncharacteristically narrow readings on the value

of popular music and jazz, and harsh critiques of its listeners. Ultimately, it was this inability to engage with an aesthetic orientation outside of the European art music canon that led him to some rather unflattering readings of the popular music of his day.

Many authors have contested Adorno's notions of the deterioration of musical society at the hands of a standardizing culture industry; however, it is DeNora who re-appropriates Adorno's work most effectively. DeNora criticizes Adorno for overemphasizing the aesthetics of 'serious' music over actual empirical examinations of the social processes of popular music (DeNora 2003, 69–73). Adorno's comparative analysis of classical and popular music is rather unhelpful. He faults popular music for its shortened forms and shrunken instrumental line-ups, rather than critically analyzing the music in the realm of the structures it adheres to.

One of Adorno's greatest contributions to the sociology of music was his focus on how the structure of music works to inform social processes (DeNora 2003, 3–5); a notion that had been given little attention until his studies. DeNora states:

For Adorno, music was nothing less than a cultural site within which social-cognitive tendencies could, through the formal properties of composition, be 'diagnosed'. Musical composition was, in other words, a potentially exemplary form of praxis. As such, it involved the handling or arrangement of materials or parts—voices and modes of voicing, motives, and themes, and also tempos and rhythmic figures, timbres ... and the architectonics of harmonic 'progression'. As a mode of arrangement, a way of fashioning material into 'parts' and 'wholes', musical composition

evidenced, for Adorno, social content; it demonstrated modes of handling, ways of ordering (musical) reality. (2003, 11)

She extends Adorno's argument by indicating that the power inherent in music, due mainly to its ability to stir emotional response, provides insight into social processes (DeNora 2003, 49–50). Music helps to inform the subject of how to function within specific social settings (ibid).

DeNora argues that music serves two specific cognitive functions which relate to how music informs the listener of social processes: a) access for the subject to understand his/her relation to social surroundings; b) a didactic function informing how relationships, in part or whole, between the subject and their social surroundings are best conceived and interpreted (2003, 11–12). Ultimately, what DeNora contributes to Adorno's preliminary ideas on popular music is the reinsertion of the autonomous subject to contextualize and understand how social processes are mediated by music (2003). It is through this reinsertion of the agential subject that music adds to the scaffolding of "knowledge formation" (DeNora 2003, 21). This 'knowledge formation' is achieved through what she understands as the 'musical event.' (DeNora 2003, 49). The musical event consists of the subject's comprehension of social processes through a musical experience (ibid). DeNora describes the 'musical event' as consisting of:

a specific act of engagement with music. The core of the concept can be found in the five components, A to E....These events consist of an actor or actors (A), composers, listeners, performers, music analysts, and others, who engage with or 'do things with' (C) music (B) within specific environments (E) and under local conditions (D). Music (B) can mean

whole ‘works’ or any aspect or feature of musical material (eg., a fragment of a work, a bit of improvised music, even something like whistling or humming to one’s self), whether being made/heard live or on record or imagined. What is key here is how the music is, or comes to be, meaningful *to the actors who engage with it*, including such matters as whether the relevant actors notice it (as is the case of background music in public places). (2003, 49, italics in original)

Small argues that “there is no such thing as music,” (1998, 2) only musical works, and that music is a continuous action of performance—dubbed “musicking” by Small (1998, 9).

There is no such thing as music. Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. The apparent thing “music” is a figment, an abstraction of the action, whose reality vanishes as soon as we examine it at all closely. This habit of thinking in abstractions, of taking from an action what appears to be its essence of giving that essence a name, is probably as old as language; it is useful in the conceptualizing of our world but it has its dangers. (Small 1998, 2)

Small states that “performance does not exist in order to present musical works, but rather, musical works exist in order to give performers something to perform” (1998, 8), ultimately inverting the emphasis away from the musical work onto the performance and the performers. He argues that if the musical work were the real showcase, one could simply read the score much like one reads a book (Small 1998). He continues to argue that “to music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by

performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing” (Small 1998, 9). Performance becomes an intricate action undertaken by the performer that contributes to the comprehension of one’s “very humanness” (Small 1998, 8).

In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Hebdige examines how constructions of subcultures are created—investigating how a variety of mundane accessories, and fashion combinations, come to symbolize newly inculcated and specifically subcultural significance (1979, 1–4). Hebdige defines subculture as “always in dispute, and style is the area in which the opposing definitions clash with most dramatic force” (1979, 3). This clash of style, as he describes, becomes the spark that breathes new forms of cultural consciousness. He continues by explaining that subculture is a:

process whereby objects are made to mean and mean again as ‘style’....  
[T]his process begins with a crime against the natural order, though in this case the deviation may seem slight indeed—the cultivation of a quiff, the acquisition of a scooter or a record or a certain type of suit. But it ends in the construction of a style, in a gesture of defiance or contempt, in a smile or a sneer. It signals a Refusal. I would like to think that this Refusal is worth making, that these gestures have a meaning, that the smiles and the sneers have some subversive value, even if, in the final analysis, they are...just the darker side of sets of regulations, just so much graffiti on a prison wall. (Hebdige 1979, 3)

I include an examination of subcultures because the music that Stop Murder Music contests is birthed out of a ghettoized subculture in Jamaica. Therefore examining

subcultures helps to highlight how dancehall music is constructed and produced.

Although the point of the significance of music in the creation of subcultures seems to be somewhat glossed over in Hebdige's analysis; music is intricately involved in how subcultures come to fruition, inculcated with overlapping significance of race, gender, ethnicity, nationalism, and sexuality (1979). Hebdige, as well as Shuker, argues that class positions, with emphasis placed on race within these class boundaries, are the ultimate factor that influences subcultural membership (1979, 79; 1994, 22–26). Hebdige analyzes how symbolic dress and the propensity towards certain musical styles influences cultural alliances, rebellions and often times gendered behaviour—be it hyper-masculinity as is the case with Rude Boys, or androgyny within the punk phenomenon (Hebdige 1979). Each of these elemental aspects of subculture, it is argued by both Hebdige and Shuker, persist and emerge out of class positions and distinctions (1979, 18; 1994, 22–26).

Hebdige states:

'humble objects' [which] can be magically appropriated; 'stolen' by subordinate groups and made to carry 'secret' meanings: meanings which express, in code, a form of resistance to the order which guarantees their continued subordination. Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations go 'against nature', interrupting the process of 'normalization'. As such, they are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus. (1979, 18)



It is debatable whether themes in music are highlighted prior to the onset of subcultural formation, or occur once the particular subculture is, to some degree, fermented within society. It can also be argued that subcultures can form at the same time as certain themes in music are highlighted which, to some degree, represent the forming subculture. Hebdige tends to lean towards themes in music being highlighted prior to the onset of subcultural formation, explaining that subcultures generally emerge within a parent culture, with an established musical genre evolving and becoming more and more associated with particular subcultures (1979, 84–87). The subculture in essence works to revert, subvert, or highlight underlying social mores that generally go unspoken. These unspoken, underlying social mores become the details in the construction and alliance of subcultures (Hebdige 1979, 73–75). In other words, each significant element of subcultures is ideologically, grounded in particular institutional structures: “there is an ideological dimension to every signification” (Hebdige 1979, 13). Hebdige continues:

[a]ll aspects of culture possess a semiotic value, and the most taken-for-granted phenomena can function as signs: as elements in communication systems governed by semantic rules and codes which are not themselves directly apprehended in experience. These signs are, then, as opaque as the social relations which produce them and which they re-present. (1979, 13)

Roy Shuker examines the cultural and social influence on the production, distribution and marketing of popular music in his book *Understanding Popular Music* (1994). Shuker’s analysis of popular music production takes a brief glance at a variety of authors (including Adorno, Hebdige, and Small) and other theoretical positions, offering more of an explanatory map of the gender and racial terrain of rock music (Shuker 1994).

Arguably, Shuker's most salient argument for the analysis of popular music is his emphasis on interpreting it as an expressive whole, with cultural and social influences constantly at work in how it is composed, performed and distributed. He argues that it is:

difficult to write about an aural (or visual) experience, reducing it to patterns of verbal language. Part of the problem here is that separating a piece of music into its constituent elements (harmony, rhythm, etc.) glosses over the central point that it is more than the sum of its parts, and that there is a crucial interdependence of these various dimensions. (Shuker 1994, 144)

What Shuker is suggesting here is that music cannot be easily reduced to a single particularity. He continues:

Nevertheless, it is possible to take into account, albeit at a simple level, the basic musical aspects of [popular music]. However, a concentration on technical textual aspects alone—the score—is inadequate, since it fails to deal with how the effects listeners celebrate are constructed....This takes into consideration the role of pleasure, the relationship of the body, feelings and emotions, and sexuality in constructing responses to...music. (Shuker 1994, 144)

Although it is technically possible to separate the elemental features of music, Shuker argues that doing so misinterprets how music is perceived. Separating the elemental features of music would be comparable to assessing the quality of a film based on a separate analysis of all the processes that go into making a film (lighting, acting, cinematography, script, direction, production quality) as opposed to understanding how

each element works in conjunction with the film in its entirety. To examine music in a similar manner strips the researcher of the capacity to properly understand how the music is received by listeners.

In highlighting Shuker's reminder that music is a complex whole, that is, one that remains at its most meaningful as a complex whole, it is my intention to simply demonstrate the folly of a lyric analysis when it is considered without a thorough and richly informed treatment of words performed to music, or words performed as music. I do not intend however, to offer such an analysis on the musical performances mentioned in this study—there are those better suited to the matter than I. That said, I do believe that there is worth to my insistence here that the SMM campaign lacks credibility in its *social critique* of select Dancehall artists until such time as to consider a more nuanced reading of the musical subject, and not just the music-making subjects (Jamaican Dancehall artists and their listeners). That such a reading requires a musicologist does not preclude that my sociological intervention here serves as a reminder to this end, and one that is buttressed by the musicologists I have highlighted here.

### III. VIOLENCE IN MUSIC AND THE ENSUING MORAL PANIC

One of the most contested aspect of Jamaican dancehall music is its propensity towards suggesting violent behaviour against homosexuals. It is this suggestion for violence that Stop Murder Music is protesting. If the suggestion in the music was more ubiquitous and vague in its target, it is likely that the campaign against it would never have been founded. Therefore it is necessary to understand precisely how violence and music are inter-related—how does music incite and arouse violence? Some of the

forbearers of this emerging field of enquiry are Bruce Johnson and Martin Cloonan (2009) with their work *Dark Side of the Tune: Popular Music and Violence*. Most scholars understand popular music as being a calming agent on the listener—a medium that evokes emotion and passion, but rarely violence. In *Dark Side of the Tune*, Johnson and Cloonan research the variety of ways music incites and arouses violent behaviour. Music has been connected to warfare, forms of torture, instigations of political propaganda, and violent concert behaviour (Johnson and Cloonan 2009).

What is most salient for my research is precisely how music incites violence and whether or not this incitement can actually arouse violent behaviour. The distinction is subtle, but significant. Johnson and Cloonan's working definition of 'incitement' is as follows:

The Compact Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb 'incite' as to '**urge or persuade to act in a violent or unlawful way**'. In our discussion the emphasis is on the term 'violent', and while much of the violence takes us into the realm of the 'unlawful', this is not always the case. **Incitement may be explicit encouragement, or latent in the peer-group validation of violence as a social option, an example of how one may behave...** We distinguish 'incitement' from other connections between music and violence, such as 'causing', 'generating' or 'arousing' by virtue of the fact that incitement is in the music, while the other are in its audience. (2009, 95, bold in original)

In this instance, incitement is an explicit suggestion of violence that stems from within the music itself, rather than a listener's arousal to violence through his or her

interpretation of the song's meaning or intention. An example can be a band's explicit suggestion in the lyrics to a song to kill police officers versus a tune that may be heard as aggressive but is not explicit in its incitement. In the case of a song offering a more implicit suggestion of aggressive behaviour, a listener might interpret the music in a specific way and decide for him/herself to behave violently—this would be an example of how music arouses violent behaviour. Johnson and Cloonan continue to elaborate their definition of incitement:

We recognize that the distinction is not absolute, as in the example of a band that destroys its equipment while performing. We also recognize ... that some forms of vilification are 'symbolic violence', so that incitement is itself a form of violence ... When we speak of incitement being 'in a piece of music', we do not necessarily imply that the music overall is therefore to be regarded as inciting violence, any more than the exhortation to violence by a character in a play implies that the play seeks to incite violence ... [I]t is not axiomatic that the narrative voice of a lyric expresses the overall thrust of the song containing the lyric. (2009, 95)

Johnson and Cloonan are careful not to be misinterpreted when assessing how they have conducted research on music that incites violence. For Johnson and Cloonan, incitement is not necessarily indicative of the intentions of the singing voice or the author of the piece of music. They, perhaps naïvely, separate the piece from the authorial intention.

Incitement to violence in music is nothing new. It does not stem from current musical trends. As mentioned above, music was (and in many cases still is) often used to inculcate national pride during times of war, in hopes of instigating hatred towards enemy

states, or enemies of the state (Johnson and Cloonan 2009; Montefiore 2003). Dictator, Joseph Stalin, is credited with re-writing the national anthem to incite the citizens of the state to take up arms against its enemies (Montefiore 2003). US-born country artist Toby Keith, on his 2003 album entitled “Shock ‘n Y’all,” has written songs like “American Soldier” and “The Taliban Song,” which incite rage and revenge on the perpetrators of the twin towers destruction on 9/11. Johnson and Cloonan cite an example of how the “US tank crews in Iraq pump themselves up in the defense of US values with the kinds of songs that would in other circumstances be demonized by the guardians of those values, a particular favourite being Drowning Pool’s ‘Let the Bodies Hit the Floor’” (2009, 97). Aside from popular artists expressing violent opinions about particular social and political issues, government policies and projects often include music that incites violence to further their goals in times of war (Johnson and Cloonan 2009; Montefiore 2003; Craig and Mkhize 2006).

Although the incitement to violence may be explicit in the examples mentioned above, it is a completely different matter as to whether this incitement actually arouses violence in its listeners. To continue the example mentioned above, a song might advocate or incite the killing of police officers; however, the song’s listener(s) might never actually kill a police officer, or desire to kill a police officer as a result of hearing that song. The correlation between the song’s message and the violent behaviour of the listeners enacting what the song is inciting is a precarious one at best. Moreover, if violence towards police officers did occur, it would be difficult to draw a direct connection from that violence to the aggressor listening to the song. However, just because there is no direct connection to be made does not imply there is not some form of

connection between incitement and arousal of violence in popular music albeit direct in some cases. Johnson and Cloonan argue: “even something as straightforward as dancing suggests that music modifies behaviour” (2009, 122). However, dancing to music is hardly similar to behaving violently. One act is socially acceptable in most societies with no immediately apparent adverse consequences, where the latter is condemned and punishable by the laws of a state. The actor in both scenarios is aware of the ramifications of their actions, and surely takes the consequences into account prior to acting.

In her article “Anthropological Perspectives on Music and Emotion,” Judith Becker defines the arousal of emotion in music as: “stimulation of the autonomic nervous system ... The heart beats faster, the pulse rises, breathing becomes shallower, the skin temperature rises, and the pattern brain waves becomes less regular” (Becker 2001, 144); there are further physiological changes that occur during the listening to music however, these changes, as Johnson and Cloonan suggest, do not necessarily amount to particular types of action. Returning to the example mentioned above of the US troops getting “pumped up” by playing music, Johnson and Cloonan state that many of the soldiers they interviewed experienced music more as a retreat from the brutality of what they face every day (2009, 124). Other soldiers definitely felt a physiological arousal helping to follow through with their duties, while others used the music as a psychological coping mechanism (Johnson and Cloonan 2009). What is apparent here is that the reception of music as it relates to physiological, emotional arousal is distinct for every individual listener. A song may arouse one type of emotion in one listener, but the very same musical experience (even if the surrounding circumstances in which the song is heard are

consistent amongst listeners) may arouse a completely separate kind of emotion in another listener.

To help clarify this distinction between listeners, Johnson and Cloonan refer to definitions of ‘valence’ and ‘arousal.’ Schubert, quoted in Johnson and Cloonan, states that valence is “the affective tone of an emotion” (2007, 481). Johnson and Cloonan paraphrase Schubert by stating that this “affective tone of an emotion” runs

from negativity (sadness) to positivity (happiness). Arousal refer to ‘the amount of activity’ of an emotion, from excitement to languor. The axes intersect to form four quadrants. Negative valence and low arousal cluster in one quadrant with emotions such as depression accompanied by lassitude. Negative valence and high arousal emotions such as anger and terror are located in an adjacent quadrant, which is the most relevant location for this study. (2009, 124–125)

Ultimately, what is pertinent to this study is the distinction between incitement to violence and arousal to violence, and within arousal, the distinction between valence and arousal. Even if the incitement produces a desire to behave violently, the desire may only manifest as valence, and might never reach the level whereupon the listener takes action. These distinctions are absolutely necessary in examining the SMM campaign, as some of the claims made by the campaign neglect to take these multi-dimensional aspects into consideration when attacking dancehall music.



### **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

In determining the most effective method for this research, I decided to embark upon music sociology and cultural studies guided type of qualitative discourse analysis. Given that my main interest in researching the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign is to understand how the debate is being framed, a discourse analysis is the best method to determine the underlying factors of what is being said and how. However, given the approach through which I discuss issues related to the Stop Murder Music campaign, I have performed a modified version of discourse analysis whereby I predominantly focus on aspects of the discourse which surrounded music and music as cultural production. I do, however, discuss elements which broach areas such as sexuality and gender as it is taken up in Jamaican dancehall music however, these aspects meanders slightly from my thesis focus, and thus are intended to provide greater context to the Stop Murder Music campaign and how I am analyzing it. I have decided to approach discourse analysis in this modified format given certain time and length restrictions. I decided to focus in on one particular area of the discussion involving Stop Murder Music, with peripheral attention placed on the other aspects that do not specifically examine the music and how the music functions. Ultimately, I felt this focus would offer a more concise argument.

This chapter begins with a brief explanation of qualitative discourse analysis as it applies to my research. I then discuss the rationale for why I chose not to embark on other qualitative forms of research, namely interviews. I explain which primary sources I use, how I came to obtain them, why they were chosen, and what biases and caveats I attempted to avoid in my analysis of them. Finally, I discuss the theoretical paradigm which guides my research. First, I discuss the process of analyzing music in a more

holistic sense—as opposed to focusing solely on lyrical content; and second, I discuss how cultural studies and the study of cultural production informs my methodology.

In researching qualitative discourse analysis methods I came upon the works of Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski (2008). Wodak describes discourse analysis as providing:

a general framework to *problem-oriented social research*. It allows the integration of different dimensions of *interdisciplinarity* and multiple perspectives on the object investigated. Every interview, focus group debate, TV debate or visual symbol is conceived as a semiotic entity, embedded in an *immediate, text-internal co-text and an intertextual and socio-political* context. Analysis thus has to take into account the *intertextuality and interdiscursive relationships* between utterances, texts, genres and discourses, as well as the extralinguistic social/sociological variables, the *history and archaeology of an organization*, and institutional frames of a specific *context of situation*. (2008, 2, italics in original)

Discourse analysis provides the researcher with an understanding of the overarching issues that feed how the debate is being framed through the analysis of various texts. My research critically assesses how the Stop Murder Music campaign has come to position itself as an advocate against homophobic dancehall music, as well as the paradigmatic framework from which their actions and motivations stem. The only way I could obtain a proper critical analysis was through a deeper understanding of the discourse. This methodology of a guided form of discourse analysis provides a concise inspection into the underlying significance of the campaign's efforts and the resulting implications.

In Ruth Wodak and Michal Krzyzanowski's *Qualitative Discourse Analysis in the Social Sciences*, Mautner argues that although analyzing print media is an effective means for conducting research based particularly on the ubiquity and easy accessibility of articles, there is however a stipulation: one must be aware of potential biases and underlying manipulations of reported stories (2008, 32–33). Given the SMM campaign's notoriety and inflammatory subject matter, this concern for bias is particularly pertinent. As I have mentioned above, it is these biases and how they may cloud the issues at hand that I intend to address as tools used by the campaign to further their end goals. Moreover, because the campaign plays off of the moral and ethical principles of human rights, many journalists who report on the actions of the targeted Jamaican dancehall artists occasionally inject their own opinions on morality and ethics.

Due mainly to issues of resource limitations, scope, and focus, I decided not to conduct interviews with those directly involved (e.g., the campaign, Jamaican dancehall artists, management teams of the dancehall artists, sponsors of events hosting performances by the dancehall artists, etc.). This research focuses on the controversial debates that surround the campaign and how the campaign adds to issues of the racialization of Jamaican people and dancehall artists. I am interested in detailing the implications of the paradigmatic framework the campaign prospers from and functions within. When considering which methodology was best to employ, I asked myself questions such as: Who is the most influential in framing the debate? What effects does the debate have on international relations regarding cultural exports, in this case, music? What is the debate focusing on? Ultimately, I decided that the only way I could properly answer these questions was to consider material which helped paint a picture of the issues

at hand—namely issues which involved the methods and motivations of the campaign and the implications these actions had on all parties effected (i.e., Canadian queers, Jamaican dancehall artists, and listeners to Jamaican dancehall music). Considering this focus, I determined that direct interviews would not provide an accurate picture of the discourse which surrounds the debate. Interviews may detail the thoughts and feelings of those directly involved but would not necessarily elaborate on the published material that has influenced many more individuals not directly involved but directly implicated. The published material (be it newspaper article, online article, press releases, interviews, dossiers, and open letters) are readily available to the information-seeking public, and these materials frame the discourse which influences the way the public perceive dancehall artists, and more significantly Jamaica as a nation. My research is interested in this discourse to better understand the perception made onto society and the implicit and explicit implications, which could result in further racialization towards Jamaicans and dancehall music.

I chose to collect and analyze newspaper articles, press releases published by Eagle Canada on Stop Murder Music’s behalf, and open letters between the campaign and various stakeholders.<sup>11</sup> I gathered an extensive number of newspaper articles and interviews through various online sources. My first method of retrieving these sources included extensive internet searches and Google alerts for articles containing the phrases “Jamaican, dancehall, homophobic” and “Stop Murder Music”. This internet search resulted in a snowball effect whereupon I discovered websites containing archival

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<sup>11</sup> In this case, stakeholders would include third-party affiliates who benefit from having their name or brand associated with specific Jamaican dancehall artists. For instance, Pepsi sponsored a concert where Elephant Man was performing, and as such, Pepsi would be considered a stakeholder in the success of Elephant Man.

material that documented the debate since the inception of the international SMM campaign. The Google alerts kept me up to date with the careers of the Jamaican dancehall artists who have been singled out by the SMM campaign. Whenever print media with online sources mentions the SMM campaign, I would be alerted of its existence. These articles were chosen based on the fact that they represented the overall discourse surrounding the Stop Murder Music campaign. They outline the happenings of the campaign, tactics the campaign employs in their battle against dancehall music which advocates the killing of homosexuals, and more pertinently, the way in which they frame their position. How they frame their position will be expanded in the discussion section of this thesis. These primary sources which spoke to the history of the campaign, featured quotes from the campaign's frontrunners, and used language which characterized the motivations of the campaign.

Many of the articles I collected include interviews with Ade Larcher of Stop Murder Music (Canada), as well as interviews with the accused dancehall artists, Peter Tatchell of the UK branch of Stop Murder Music, and various editorial pieces that discussed this ongoing debate. Stop Murder Music (Canada), financially supported by Eagle Canada, has published many press releases, petitions, and letters to Citizenship and Immigration Minister, Diane Finley, outlining the campaign, all of which are publicly available.

The discourse surrounding the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign not only involves how the campaign positions itself against dancehall music, but also how the artists it targets react to the campaign's actions. Because these issues involve two very vocal sides, I also examined primary sources which outlined the dancehall artists'

subsequent reactions to the efforts of the Stop Murder Music campaign. This focus was necessary in order to precisely define not only how the Stop Murder Music campaign has come to frame the issues of homophobic Jamaican dancehall music, but also the resulting consequences to this framing.

In addition to the primary news sources, editorials, interviews and press releases, I also examined the music and lyrical content of the dancehall genre targeted by the SMM campaign. The lyrics of the songs that the SMM campaign has singled out come in two separate forms. There are the original patois lyrics written by the dancehall artists, and then there are the English translations which appear in the Stop Murder Music Dancehall Dossier. It is these translations to which I refer to in this thesis. The Westernized English translations come from the efforts of a Jamaican patois-speaking translator hired by the international Stop Murder Music campaign (Cooper 1994, 442). These translations have been supplemented by interpretive and pointed clarifications, littered with implied meanings, that may or may not have been the original artists' intention.<sup>12</sup> The original lyrics and the Stop Murder Music translations have fueled debate from authors including, Cooper (2004), Hope (2006a; 2006b), Alleyne (2006), Pinnock (2007), Stolzoff (2000), and Farquharson (2005). These theorists' interpretations of the patois lyrics and their cultural origins are also taken into consideration in my examination of the lyrical content.

The caveat I offer is that I cannot assess what is a 'good' or 'accurate' translation of the lyrics versus a 'bad' or 'inaccurate' translation based on my lack of experience with the patois dialect. What this research does instead is offer both translations in an

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<sup>12</sup> It must be mentioned that the only source for the lyrics I am using in my research are provided by the 'Stop Murder Music' campaign. I do not have my own personal translations of the lyrics in which to compare the translations to. Instead, I rely on counter-translations by Caribbean theorists such as Carolyn Cooper.

attempt to compare how each serves different purposes for different parties. Because I am not familiar with the patois dialect, this research will not rely too heavily on the actual meanings or intentions of the artists, but rather the discourse that surrounds the lyrics and how the interpretations/original versions are used to support or debunk claims of violent homophobic content in the music.

Ultimately, I discovered in my research a massively biased account of the Stop Murder Music campaign's efforts—a bias which sides solely with the campaign's tactics and motivations. In other words, all publications from the Stop Murder Music campaign are loaded with their own pointed manipulation of Jamaican dancehall lyrics. I was not able to discover opinions or academic sources that critically examined the campaign's lack of considering music in a more holistic sense—nowhere did I unearth sources which seemed skeptical of how the campaign was attacking an art form without proper consideration for how that art form functions. Ultimately, my research is an attempt to offer the beginnings of bridging that void.

Ironically, although this debate surrounds 'music' very little has been spoken about how music functions. I needed to examine the sources through a sociology of music and cultural studies lens in order to allow for a more refined and nuanced approach to this debate. I needed to ask myself: how does a holistic consideration of 'music' affect the framing and execution of the debate's methods and motivations? Most of what the Stop Murder Music campaign argues involves morality and legal concerns, while neglecting to understand the significance of how music functions within culture and society. Moreover, the same neglect for a holistic analysis of music is true for those authors which counter the Stop Murder Music. Many theorists who attempt to take to task

the campaign for their methods and motivations neglect to infuse a holistic examination of music into their counter-argument, instead preferring to rely solely on the cultural processes which influence the production of dancehall music.

Cultural studies is a field of inquiry which offers new insights that complement sociological research. In my cultural studies approach I turn to work by Isaac Reed and Jeffrey C. Alexander (2009), as well as Phillip Smith (1998). Both are collected editions featuring a variety of articles. Each author provides different cultural avenues for investigating particular social and cultural phenomena. Of particular relevance are works by Thompson and Georgina Born in Reed and Alexander (2009).

Thompson's article (2009) "Moral Regulation: Beyond Janet Jackson and the *Passion*", which focuses on the study of media-related moral panics, provides a methodological elaboration on how certain discourses are more successful than others through their claims of "social and legal theories" (2009, 63). Thompson explains:

Among the targets against which proponents of the "cultural turn" have directed their fire are social and legal theories that cast the modern liberal subject as an abstract individual, unencumbered by social or cultural baggage. Against liberalism, it is argued that rights are given meaning within discourses that embody subjects who can make legitimate rights claims. The legal system and processes of media regulation and censorship represent systems of meaning that enable some to be recognized as authorized subjects exercising their rights, such as that of free speech. Others, by contrast, may find that their expressive acts are given no



standing within this system and may even be classified as social problems, in need of criticism and regulation. (2009, 63)

Thompson continues by outlining how those with access to present an authoritative view on particular media regulations manage to foster “moral panics”. As I have mentioned above, Thompson understands “moral panic” to occur:

when a particular incident is taken to be a symptom of a more widespread, fundamental threat to moral values and the civilized character of a society. Ideological work is involved in the articulation of a number of potent discourses, with their negative connotations, so as to portray the incident as a threat that requires regulative action. This ideological work of articulation may be carried out by moral claims-makers of various sorts—moral entrepreneurs or crusaders, journalists, and politicians. (2009 68)

In direct relation to this research, it was important that I kept perspective on how the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign began—as a form of authoritative, morally based media regulation backed by certain claims that drew upon Canadian legislation. As resistance against homophobia grew in the West, so too did the avenue for a campaign like Stop Murder Music (Canada). The social and cultural climate within Canada lends itself to make successful a campaign that combats seemingly violent homophobic music. Thompson’s analysis on the perpetuation of particular moral panics helped to frame how the discourse surrounding Jamaican dancehall music in specific relation to the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign came to prosper.

Georgina Born discusses the methodology of cultural production, thus providing methodological insight into both the cultural production of Jamaican dancehall music as

well as the reflections of culture being made by the SMM campaign. She outlines a methodological approach that holds discourse accountable to “both the cultural object and a complex rendering of history” (Born 2009, 109). Born proposes a methodological approach for understanding art and culture which includes

five key thematics: aesthetics and the cultural object; the place of institutions; agency and subjectivity; questions of history, temporality, and change; and problems of evaluation and judgment. Of the five, each can be seen ultimately as subordinate to the first—that is, to providing a nonreductive account of the aesthetic in theorizing cultural production. In pursuing this program, I advocate a new conception of the relation between theoretical model and empirical research, one that I term “post-positivist empiricism.” (2009, 78)

Although Born’s program is admirable, I do not strictly follow Born’s proposed methodological approach to bridge empiricism and theory when studying cultural production. Born’s program does however, roughly outline the various aspects that I highlight in this thesis. Born continues by proposing the significant implications that this approach has on the study of cultural production:

The result is an understanding of particular objects and genres as a basis, then, for critical evaluation—but crucially one that, while it is informed by the actors’ judgments, is not reducible to them. The intention is to restore questions of aesthetics and form, to offer judgments of value and indicate their basis so as to invite rejoinders and revivify critical debate, not close it down. In this way a sociological hermeneutics...can remind the wider

critical debates, whether they concern television or contemporary art music—debates that have often been impeded in recent years by a relativistic impasse over questions of value—that value judgment must be made, and once made are there to be argued with. (2009, 109)

Ultimately, Born's five thematics necessary to study cultural production has influenced my research. It has offered a rough guideline for which to approach this discourse analysis that takes into consideration a more holistic analysis of how music functions. Each thematic Born outlines builds upon the next, informing how they are analyzed and considered within the overall discourse. For example, an understanding of the function of music helps to understand the subcultural institutions (as loose in structure as they are) from which Jamaican dancehall music originates. This understanding of subcultural institutions then leads us to ask questions about agency and subjectivity regarding both the production and subsequent regulation of the music—in terms of who makes the music, who listens to the music, who the music speaks for and about, and how the music is subject to forced regulation by the SMM campaign. In order to properly answer these questions about agency and subjectivity, we need to understand the history from which this genre of music comes. Once these aspects are understood, we can then gravitate towards the problems of evaluation and judgment that dancehall music has generated.

Much of the current research on the Stop Murder Music campaign focuses predominantly on the racial and political implications that the campaign espouses between the West and the Caribbean. Examining the SMM campaign through a discourse analysis guided by a cultural studies lens, with sociological consideration for the production of music, allowed for a nuanced approach to understand how the campaign

organizes itself, the implications of its global organization, and the underlying motivational factors that may be less explicit than initially believed.

#### **CHAPTER 4: STOP MURDER MUSIC (CANADA) – OVERVIEW**

The growing international success of the song “Boom Bye Bye,” by Jamaican dancehall recording artist Buju Banton, sparked a fury with a variety of queer activists, specifically Peter Tatchell—co-founder of the queer British activist group, OutRage!. Allied with the Jamaica Forum of Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-Flag), and the Black Gay Men’s Advisory Group, Tatchell organized the ‘Stop Murder Music’ campaign as a means to censor what he considered to be virulent homophobic lyrics by eight particular Jamaican dancehall DJs: Beenie Man, Buju Banton, Bounty Killer, Capleton, Elephant Man, Sizzla Kalonji, T.O.K., and Vybz Kartel. The campaign relies heavily on enforcing European and Canadian constitutional laws that prohibit the promulgation of written or performed hate speech against a specific social class or group (Tatchell 2003, 16).

Although the campaign is not limited to these eight artists, they have been singled out in the Dancehall Dossier, a pamphlet published by OutRage! The dossier serves to quickly detail the musical careers of these targeted dancehall artists. Illustrated in the dossier are the real names and birth dates for each DJ; original, translated and explanatory side notes of instances where these DJs have expressed and/or encouraged the violent abolition of queers in their lyrics; quick facts about the artists’ particular musical successes; acknowledged accomplishments on the part of Stop Murder Music to restrict specific performances and international distribution; and examples of compilations in which these songs or artists are featured and where to purchase them (Outrage!, *Dancehall Dossier*).

Tatchell claims that over sixty organizations worldwide support the Stop Murder Music campaign with branches operating out of Canada and Switzerland (Tatchell 2007). The Canadian chapter began with Akim Ade Larcher, working in coalition with queer

activist group Eagle Canada and the Canadian Caribbean Human Rights Group. Larcher is a lawyer originally from St. Lucia who emigrated to Canada to escape the prevalent homophobia in the Caribbean (Kinsella 2007, “Jamaican ‘murder music’ doesn’t belong in Canada”). Larcher’s “successes” with the campaign include a variety of concert cancellations by targeted Jamaican dancehall artists in venues across Canada (Rau 2007, “More Dancehall acts cancelled over homophobic lyrics controversy”). In September 2007, an open letter to Diane Finley, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, was drafted pleading with Finley to recognize the violent homophobic content in Elephant Man’s repertoire and deny him a Canadian working visa thus cancelling his “Let’s Get Physical Canadian Tour.” In the letter, Adé Larcher writes:

Because Elephant Man has become a symbol of pro-gay hatred in Jamaica and elsewhere, his presence in Canada can be perceived as a license to incite violence. In the past, Canada has denied entry visas to individuals who promote racist violence and other forms of hatred. Canada now has the power and duty to forbid the entry of those who incite hatred and open violence against people based on their sexual orientation. Canada can and must be an international leader in the fight against social injustice by condemning hate and violence in this ‘murder music.’ (2007a)

The letter also asks that the Canada Border Services Agency ban any foreign Elephant Man (and/or other ‘violent homophobic dancehall artists’) products from the Canadian border:

We, the coalition for the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign, also call on the Canada Border Services Agency to ban the import of products by Elephant Man, and other similar homophobic and anti-gay artists that contain “murder music”. The legal dissemination of murder music by third-party distributors creates an unacceptable loophole in the application of our *Criminal Code* and custom regulations. We have separately asked that Canadian record retailers, distributors, sponsors, promoters, broadcasters, and other telecommunication companies comply with Canadian laws and regulations against hate by ceasing all support and promotion of “murder music” on Canadian airwaves, retail stores, venues and Canadian-controlled internet websites. (2007a)

The campaign manipulates and over-emphasizes their argument of how dancehall music supposedly infringes upon Canadian legislation. They argue that to ignore that these violently homophobic lyrics is comparable to ignoring Canadian law. The letter reads: “We urge you to act immediately to deny the entry of Elephant Man. As a sign of solidarity with our cause to fight all forms of hate and discrimination, we urge the Canadian government to stand strong on this very important issue” (Adé Larcher 2007a).

The same letter was drafted requesting the same visa denials for Sizzla, who at the time was scheduled for a variety of concerts across Ontario as well. The letter simply switches specific mention of Elephant Man for Sizzla, including lyrics specific to Sizzla’s songs. The only slight difference in the two letters comes near the very end. The letter regarding Sizzla reads:

We urge you to act immediately and as a sign of solidarity with our cause to fight all forms of hate and discrimination, we urge the Police to investigate charging Sizzla for advocating and promoting the assault and murder of gays and lesbians. We also ask the Police to inform sponsors and promoters that they could also be charged criminally for aiding and abetting Sizzla, if they provide him with a platform to perform his hateful lyrics. (Adé Larcher 2007b)

Both letters proved ineffective as both Sizzla and Elephant Man performed a range of dates across Canada in Barrie, Toronto, Kitchener, Kingston, Ottawa, Montreal and Brantford from September 26, 2007 to October 6, 2007. The only success the campaign saw was the cancellation of the Elephant Man concert on September 9, 2007 at the C.A.W. Hall in St. Catharines, Ontario. The refusal to deny entry to these dancehall artists resulted in further petitions from Sylvain Abitol and Rabbi Dr. Reuven Bulka of the Canadian Jewish Congress (Abitol and Bulka 2007). Efforts were also made to reach corporations who sponsored Elephant Man and Sizzla in hopes of seeing their support rescinded. One such effort came from the letter, written in alliance with the Center For Research-Action on Race Relations, to Pepsi on October 5, 2007 to revoke their sponsorship of the Elephant Man concert held on October 5, 2007 at the Rialto in Montreal (Niemi 2007). The letter reads:

It has been brought to our attention that your company, Pepsi Canada, publicly sponsors or is associated with the concert of Elephant Man, a reggae artist from Jamaica, that will take next [sic] Friday, October 5, 2007 at the Rialto in Montreal.



As you are no doubt aware, Elephant Man is widely known for advocating, in his music, violence against gays and lesbians. He is, to gays and lesbians around the world, a symbol of hate and discrimination .... Last week, a coalition of groups in Toronto and Montreal has, through press conferences and other official representations, called upon the federal government to deny all hate-mongering artists entry into Canada and upon the Canadian music and entertainment industry to stop supporting, promoting, sponsoring and doing business with people who actively promote criminal violence and hate....

We wish to inform you that CRARR (Center for Research-Action on Race Relations) has asked the Quebec Human Rights and Youth Rights Commission as well as local law enforcement authorities to investigate and monitor Elephant Man during his visit in Montreal and his performance at the Rialto.

Regrettably, we noted that Pepsi is visibly featured [sic] as a sponsor in the poster for the Montreal concert... We are certain that Pepsi representatives were not aware of the reputation of Elephant Man, otherwise it would not have associated itself with such a reprehensible symbol of hate that has been condemned in many countries. Such an association only compromises Pepsi's image and standing as a socially responsible corporate citizen both at home and abroad.

We therefore call upon Pepsi Canada to formally disassociate itself from and publicly repudiate Elephant Man, out of ethical and moral

considerations. We strongly encourage Pepsi Canada to affirm its commitment to fundamental Canadian values of equality, diversity and freedom and to the Canadian civil rights. (Niemi 2007)

The letter calls specific attention to Elephant Man being a “symbol of hate and discrimination,” and assumes Pepsi’s ignorance in this knowledge—otherwise it simply would not have associated itself with such a symbol.

Subsequent efforts to persuade Immigration Minister Diane Finley to deny working visas to dancehall artists Capleton, Baby Cham and Beenie Man took place on October 29 2007 (Kennedy and Adé Larcher 2007). The campaign managed to effectively cancel the November 24, 2007 Capleton concert in Woodbridge, Ontario, Beenie Man’s December 7, 2007 concert in Waterloo, Ontario, and Baby Cham’s concert at Toronto’s Sound Academy on December 8, 2007 (Rau 2007). Further successes occurred for Adé Larcher and company with the removal of all accused ‘murder music’ content from the iTunes Canada online music store as is detailed in the press release from Eagle Canada on April 7, 2008 entitled: “Apple’s iTunes.ca Pulls Murder Music from its Online Store.” In addition to attempted (and successful) concert cancellations, Stop Murder Music (Canada) went so far as to organize a tourism boycott of Jamaica, intending to send messages to the Jamaican government to repeal anti-gay laws (Rau 2008, “Jamaica boycott called off”). The boycott was retracted within three days of its announcement due mainly to conflict within inter-organizational communications (Rau 2008; Infantry 2008). The leaders of J-Flag pointedly refused support of the tourism boycott, citing it as an infraction of their agreement with Stop Murder Music. Adé Larcher and Eagle Canada continue in their efforts to deny dancehall artists accused of

homophobic actions further entry into Canada, but have rescinded (for now) direct efforts to impose social and civil change in Jamaica.

The British Stop Murder Music campaign saw moderate successes in their aim to deny Jamaican dancehall artists from performing individual or festival concerts and having their names withdrawn from award show nominations, specifically the MOBO awards.<sup>13</sup> This retraction of these nominations and refusal to allow performances at the award show ceremony was the result of protests and petitions by Peter Tatchell in 2002 and 2003, contributing to his being labeled racist by dancehall promoters and black activist groups (BBC News 2004a). However, with growing concern for homosexual rights in North America and Europe, and proliferating international awareness of Western homosexual identities and lifestyles, both in the socio-political sphere and the multi-media entertainment world, the campaign became more successful than ever in pressuring government- and privately- owned venues to deny performances by targeted dancehall artists (Petridis 2004, "Pride and prejudice"). On August 16, 2004, the campaign approached German athletics clothing company PUMA, which had negotiated a sponsorship contract with the Jamaican record label of dancehall artists Buju Banton and Elephant Man. They informed PUMA of the violent homophobic content in Buju Banton and Elephant Man's lyrics, as well as other affiliated dancehall artists lyrics. PUMA reacted by presenting Banton and Elephant Man with an ultimatum to not include homophobic content in any local Jamaican or international performances or risk termination of their commercial contracts in addition to being banned from performing at

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<sup>13</sup> The Music of Black Origin (MOBO) awards are held annually in the UK. Both Elephant Man and Vybz Kartel were removed from the nomination lists (BBC News 2004b).

future concerts promoted by PUMA. PUMA's official statement declares a zero tolerance policy to any cultural and/or homophobic violent sentiments. The statement reads:

PUMA's policy does not tolerate hate statements of any sort, including homophobic hatred or views that endorse homophobic violence.

Upon Buju Banton's arrival in Athens, a senior PUMA staff member will brief him on our zero tolerance policy towards homophobia and other forms of prejudice. Buju Banton will be told that if he chooses to break this policy he will not be allowed to perform at the Athens show and will no longer be supported by the PUMA brand.

Additionally, if Buju Banton defies this agreement and performs a song using anti-gay lyrics—either at the Athens concert or at any future concert anywhere in the world—PUMA will not associate with him in the future. This also hold true for all performers with which PUMA works.

When speaking with Buju Banton and other artists, specifically in the Jamaican community, we will inform them of our zero tolerance stand on hate statements and lyrics. PUMA will encourage reggae artists to take responsibility for their lyrics and their global impact. (Gautier 2004)

Tatchell has claimed that as a result of the growing approval and support for the campaign, the targeted dancehall artists' combined lost personal revenue is in excess of \$5 million, due to proscriptions from European concert venues and depleted album sales (Tatchell 2007). Since July of 2004, dancehall artists have seen over 126 international concert cancellations (including venues in London, England and Toronto). The majority

of concert cancellations are of Beenie Man concerts, equaling twenty-two, Sizzla has seen thirty-five concerts cancelled, and Capleton has had twenty-four cancelled.<sup>14</sup>

The increasing success of Stop Murder Music incited the drafting of the Reggae Compassionate Act in June of 2007. The document was coordinated and negotiated by Tatchell (of OutRage!), Dennis Carney (of the Black Gay Men's Advisory Group), Gareth Williams (of J-Flag), Eddie Brown (of Pride Music UK, a dancehall promotions firm centred outside of the UK), as well as a variety of other European dancehall promoters (Tatchell 2007).

The Reggae Compassionate Act (RCA) is a document, which upon signing, aspires to secure that accused homophobic dancehall artists will retract, through contrition, past homophobic attitudes, as well as suspend future plans to produce or perform music with lyrics that advocate hate for homosexuals. The Act reads:

We, the artists of the Reggae community, hereby present this letter as a symbol of our dedication to the guiding principles of Reggae's enduring foundation ONE LOVE [sic]. Throughout time, Reggae has been recognized as a healing remedy and an agent of positive social change. We will continue this proud and righteous tradition.

Reggae Artists and their music have fought against injustices, inequalities, poverty and violence even while enduring some of those same circumstances themselves. Over the years, reggae music has become popularized and enjoyed by an unprecedented audience all over the world. Artists of the Reggae Community respect and uphold the rights of all

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/k\\_concerts.htm](http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/k_concerts.htm)

individuals to live without fear of hatred and violence due to their religion, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity or gender.

While we recognize that our artistic community comprises many different individuals who express themselves in different ways and hold a myriad of beliefs, we believe firmly that the way forward lies in tolerance. Everyone can keep his own conviction and we must receive respect for our freedom of speech as far as we respect the law, but it must be clear there's no space in the music community for hatred and prejudice, including no place for racism, violence, sexism or homophobia.

We do not encourage nor minister to HATE [sic] but rather uphold a philosophy of LOVE, RESPECT and UNDERSTANDING [sic] towards all human beings as the cornerstone of reggae music.

This Compassionate Act is hereby calling on a return to the following principles as the guiding vision for the future of a healthy Reggae music community:

- Positive Vibrations
- Consciousness raising
- Social and Civic Engagement
- Democracy and Freedom
- Peace and Non-Violence
- Mother Nature
- Equal Rights and Justice
- One Love

- Individual Rights
- Humanity
- Tolerance and Understanding

We, as artists, are committed to a holistic and healthy existence in the world, and to respect to the utmost the human and natural world. We pledge that our music will continue to contribute positively to the world dialogue on peace, respect and justice for all.

To this end, we agree to not make statements or perform songs that incite hatred or violence against anyone from any community.

ONE LOVE. (Reggae Compassionate Act)

The Act briefly explains the rooted origins of reggae music as a cultural force, with its attempts to fight against a variety of social, political, and economical injustices while under the influence of positive sentiments and the Jamaican principle of one love. The Act posits that reggae music should continue to be produced through positivity without propagating and encouraging violent actions towards any specific minority group regardless of community or social practices.

A variety of critical reactions resulted in the wake of the RCA—one of which was the hypocritical rationales that fuelled its drafting. OutRage!, and other affiliate organizations, feared that artists' motivations for signing the agreement were influenced primarily out of desperation to acquire further international success, without regard to ending homophobic violence. It is interesting that the irony is seemingly lost on OutRage! and its affiliates. Considering, as mentioned above, the pride in which Tatchell took in seeing a hefty monetary loss for these artists resulting from the efforts of the

campaign, why wouldn't these artists sign the agreement more in fear of not incurring greater revenue losses? Peter Tatchell is operating under a double standard. He considers the Stop Murder Music's efforts to be successful if it results in the loss of income dancehall artists gain from performances and record sales and not necessarily in the changed attitudes of the artists. However, when dancehall artists do sign the Reggae Compassionate Act, he expects them to do so not in fear of losing more money, but rather out of the kindness of their hearts for the gay community (Tatchell 2007, "The impact of the Murder Music campaign").

Of the eight artists targeted by the campaign, four signed the act and four refused to take part. The first three to sign, Beenie Man, Sizzla and Capleton in June of 2007, with Buju Banton following only a few months later (International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission 2007). The rationale for why these artists eventually signed the act is unclear. Upon signing the RCA, the Stop Murder Music campaign would halt their efforts to have the artists censored with only a few provisions. The artists were placed on a six-month probationary period where their careers would be extensively followed by the campaign. If any evidence of homophobic content surfaced in their on-stage performances, interviews, or recorded music, the Stop Murder Music campaign would resume its efforts to silence them in full force. If, however, the artists maintained a level of respect for the queer community, the campaign would then withdraw and affiliated organizations would come out in full support of the artists.

Once word had spread in Jamaica that four dancehall artists had signed the RCA, those artists either broke their agreement, or flat out denied having ever signed it. Sizzla was the first to breach the contract during a stage performance in Berlin on June 13



2007.<sup>15</sup> He began to vehemently speak against ‘apologizing’ to homosexuals, performing his 2005 recorded song “Nah Apologize” (Never Apologize), which proclaims his belief in never apologizing to homosexuals because of their lifestyle and its discordance with fundamental Jamaican Christianity (Eagle Canada 2007, “Backgrounder”). Capleton denied his signing of the Reggae Compassionate Act in a concert held on December 25, 2007 at the Magnum GT Taylor Christmas Extravaganza in River, Jamaica where he performed his track “Fire Time,” a song condemned by the Stop Murder Music campaign.<sup>16</sup> Beenie Man brazenly abjured to having ever signed such a contract in an interview with Xtrtainment on June 16, 2007 (Yeebo 2007), only one month after it was announced that he had. Buju Banton also breached his contractual agreement in a concert on October 27, 2007 at the Guyana Music Festival where he ad-libbed lyrics expressing his distaste of homosexuals and their subsequent attack of him through the Stop Murder Music campaign. The concert continued with Banton singing a few lines from his controversial song “Boom Bye Bye” near the end of the concert—the song that sparked the Stop Murder Music campaign in the early 90s.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of these artists breach of the Reggae Compassionate Act, or complete refusal that it was ever signed, there does exist, on a variety of websites, photographed evidence of the agreement with each artists’ signatures.<sup>18</sup>

In recent years, a backlash against the campaign from local Jamaican artists and promoters has surfaced. They criticize the campaign for its colonial inclinations to disregard any social and/or cultural context of dancehall music and artists’ rationales for

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/f\\_apology.htm](http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/f_apology.htm)

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/f\\_apology.htm](http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/f_apology.htm)

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/v\\_article\\_020.htm](http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/v_article_020.htm)

<sup>18</sup> Photographs of each artists signatures are available at:  
[http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/w\\_compassionate\\_001.htm](http://www.soulrebels.org/dancehall/w_compassionate_001.htm)

speaking out against a variety of issues, homosexuality being only one (Petridis 2004). Dancehall promotions co-ordinator Dennis Howard, of Supreme Promotions in Jamaica, defends the berated musical style by suggesting that DJ performers express extreme violence towards homosexuals as a means of entertainment, metaphorically mimicking sentiments supported and felt by the majority of dancehall audiences and Jamaican locals (Petridis 2004). Dancehall, he argues, is an exaggeration of cultural beliefs and that homosexuality is not abhorred as suggested in dancehall lyrics (Petridis 2004). Howard, in an interview with Petridis, states:

If you are a DJ, a performer in dancehall, you cannot just go onstage and they applaud you, it's not that kind of concert. During the performance, you have to get a forward, which is people holding up their hand or lighters and cheering. They know they'll get a response by talking about a set of things, some of them commendable. It is not homosexuality alone. It is abortion, police informers, paedophiles, rapists, bowcat (which is oral sex). So if the performance is not going well, they say: 'Hold up yuh hand if yuh nuh like battyman, hold up yuh hand if yuh nuh suck pussy, yuh nuh bowcat.' I'm not defending them, because although I'm one of dancehall's biggest supporters, I've been one of their biggest critics, but they're not literally saying kill a battyboy or step on the chi chi man, you understand? It's metaphorical. They have been saying 'informer fi dead', 'bowcat fi dead' for a long time, but they don't literally mean it. It's annoying what the DJs are doing because they are just pandering to the

crowd and it's uncreative, but you can't take it in the same context as when someone in your culture does it. (Petridis 2004)

Howard does contend that DJs ought to reduce the degree of homophobic content in their lyrics, however apologizing for past transgressions could easily result in the end of the DJs local Jamaican music career, which is of greater significance than international success and fame (Petridis 2004, "Pride and prejudice").

Author Carolyn Cooper (2004) argues that dancehall music is not literal, but rather a cultural metaphor for socio-economic politics and social circumstances—namely that hypermasculinity is conjured as a metaphorical battle against the elite upper class. The battle against the elite upper-class results in these Jamaican artists feminizing and homosexualizing them (Cooper 1994). Basically, dancehall artists succeed in detailing their lower-class ghettoized social positioning by gendering the socio-economic political situation in Jamaica with aspirations to conquer the colonial circumstances they find themselves in (Cooper 1994).

In his attempts at censoring dancehall music, Tatchell has been criticized for being racist and hierarchalizing homophobia above racism without regard to the intricate divergences of each form of discrimination. Some Jamaican journalists and dancehall promoters are even faulting the campaign as aggravating homophobia in Jamaica and creating an even more hostile environment for Jamaican queers (Petridis 2004, "Pride and prejudice"; Mills 2008, "Dispatches from Kingston, Jamaica"). Matt Mills posits that living conditions for openly queer individuals in Kingston, Jamaica, since the inception of the Stop Murder Music campaign, has become almost unbearable, with daily threats of potentially fatal violence and torture. Mills details the brutal torture and violence

surrounding the death of J-Flag co-founder Brian Williamson, and how his death has caused his successor to seek refuge in Canada, and the current J-Flag co-ordinator, Gareth Williams to conduct advocacy under a pseudonym (Mills 2008, “Dispatches from Kingston, Jamaica”). Ultimately, what is being suggested is that the conditions for homosexuals in Jamaica are worsening as the forcefulness of the campaign grows. Some artists’ promoters have suggested that the force of the campaign, to have the artists apologize for their vocal condemnation of homosexuals, has in fact fueled artists to be more vocal about their condemnation—the opposite effect of what the campaign is intending. In my opinion, it seems as though the SMM campaign is doing to dancehall artists what the dancehall artists are doing to homosexuals. This concept of fighting “fire with fire” is only worsening conditions for homosexuals—especially those living in Jamaica.

Despite the criticisms of social conditions in Jamaica and the accused racist connotations of the campaign, Stop Murder Music continues to meticulously monitor the development of translated homophobic content in dancehall music, both locally within Jamaica and internationally abroad, with attempts at censoring its dissemination.

## **CHAPTER 5: TAKING CULTURAL AND MUSICAL CONTEXT INTO CONSIDERATION**

The founding motivations of the Stop Murder Music campaign derive from a kind of moral panic. A moral panic about the violence aimed at the homosexual community. It seems doubtful that if the songs were merely homophobic, and not violently so, the campaign's retaliation would be as vehement. Instead, it seems that the incitement to what the campaign deems brutal violence that has fostered such moral panic. There are constant references to gun metaphors and killing in the English translations of the lyrics, which appear in the campaign's press releases, letters to the Minister of Immigration, and published dossiers. The campaign highlights these references in such a way as to manipulate the severity of the issue as opposed to portraying a more accurate picture of the lived reality of both queers in Canada and those who listen to Jamaican dancehall music—which can overlap.

In this chapter I analyze the methods employed by the campaign through a discussion of the actual threat the music poses, as well as an analysis on how the campaign frames its argument. My analysis is separated into four themes: the origins of violence in dancehall music; the sound of dancehall music; a brief comparison of dancehall music to North American Rap and Hip Hop; the incitement of violence in dancehall music.

The campaign bases its argument on the degree of violence in the lyrics of dancehall music. It is necessary to understand just how violence originated in the dancehall. In his book *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica* (2000), Norman C. Stolzoff refers to the ubiquity of violence in Jamaican

dancehall culture. Western-genre films and their depictions of the lone outsider who fights for justice against a corrupt agent of the state, like a sheriff, have influenced dancehall culture and their appropriations of symbolic gun violence (Cooper 1994, 430–432). Cooper states that “‘Badmanism’ is a theatrical pose that has been refined in the complicated socialization processes of Jamaican ghetto youth who learn to imitate the sartorial and ideological ‘style’ of the heroes and villains of imported [Western-genre] American films” (1994, 430–431). Within the Jamaican dancehall subculture, Western-genre films are emulated because of their portrayal of the “badass” social outsider who battles for justice against a crooked sheriff—in most cases the sheriff comes to stand as a metaphorical representation of the state as a whole. Also, the impact of Rastafarianism fuelled this symbolism by creating a spiritual ballast for social resistance (Stolzoff 2000; Hebdige 1979). The articulation of Rastafarian social upheaval in the dancehall fostered, as Stolzoff argues, “a religiously oriented black nationalism that championed repatriation to the motherland—Africa” (2000, 78). Rastafarian ideologies appealed to lower class youth who emerged through the dancehall as ‘rude boys’, thus solidifying the identificatory catalyst of the rude boy subculture (Chevannes 1994; Hebdige 1979). The rude boy subculture is considered a deviant subculture of young males who are inclined to rebellious behaviour against ‘the system’ (Stolzoff 2000; Hebdige 1979). Stolzoff explains that:

[t]his brand of defiant rude-boy music, with its allusions to Rastafari prophecy and political revolution, was usually censored from the airwaves, while more lighthearted ska music was getting some radio play. As a result, the sound system dance was the only place where so-called message

music could be heard. To this day, the sound system retain this function of playing “hardcore reality” music that cannot be heard anywhere else.

(2000, 83)

The Rastas’ ideology fostered violent clashes between socio-political groups within the dancehall. At the centre of this clash was the considerable ideological differences between sexuality and decency (Cooper 2004; Alleyne 2006; Pinnock 2007, Stolzoff 2000; Barrow and Dalton 1997). The dancehall soon gained a reputation throughout Jamaica for violence, where police raids were a common place occurrence (Stolzoff 2000).

From the mid-1960s, the cause of violence began to shift away from political clashes to more criminal motivations, such as gang-related quarrels (Stolzoff 2000; Lesser 2008; Lacey 1977). Stolzoff states:

In the months before the 1967 election, each party forged relationships with the youth gangs from various ghetto neighbourhoods in an effort to control electoral districts. As a consequence, each ghetto area came to be dominated by a gang with affiliation to one of the two political parties. The city of Kingston was divided like a checkerboard into political garrisons controlled by the gangs under the patronage of party leadership. At this stage, political rivalry took a decisive turn toward armed political warfare. The increase in political violence, especially the introduction of guns, generally raised the level of violence in the society, which included police brutality against civilians. (2000, 84)

Stolzoff continues to explain that the politicians, who sought gun-touting gang members as enforcers, began to lose the hold they claimed on them (2000). Shortly thereafter the violence that was initiated through political unrest between the parties, began to seep into the dancehall (ibid). Lacey explains that:

In the second half of September 1966, the wave of violence which had commenced in February began to change in character. Although the JLP-PNP<sup>[19]</sup> political war consolidated, there began to be reports of violence which did not fit the ordinary pattern of political clashes, for example, gang attacks with Molotovs on dances, the first incidence which occurred in mid-September. (Lacey 1977, 91)

The dancehall began to become notorious as a place of violence. Stolzoff explains that:

the dances started to attract the attention of government security forces. Police surveillance of the dancehalls became a regular occurrence. The police presence was not implemented to protect dancehall patrons from gang attacks, but to close in on the dancehall as a place that harboured violent criminals. The persistent pattern of raiding dancehalls, harassing sound systems and their supporters, and forcing dancehalls to shut down early in the night, known as locking off a session, was established in this period. During these raids on dancehalls, the police often attempted to extract bribes. Generally speaking, the government and social elites encourages or at least turned a blind eye to the police terrorism and privateering [sic]. Thus, the dancehall, once a space of inter-class

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<sup>19</sup> JLP stands for Jamaica Labor Party; PNP stands for People's National Party (two political parties in Jamaica).



boundary crossing, had become a space of lower-class competition and ongoing conflict between the participants of dancehall and the state security forces. (2000, 86)

The propensity towards violence in the dancehall cannot be understated here. Donna Hope reiterates Stolzoff's observation of how the dancehall became entrenched in violence and violent figures. She describes the role of the Don/Shotta in the dancehall:

In Jamaican dancehall culture, the contemporary Don/Shotta is a being whose entire existence is circumscribed and defined by violence, deviance and lawlessness, as defined by traditional, middle-class Jamaican mores. This phenomenon includes the lyrical, symbolic and physical parody of violence that select male artistes and their supporters in the dancehall engage in. It extends beyond the lyrical and physical...and enters the ideological that includes a belief in/subscription to use of violence and lawlessness as a means to an end. It is within this social and ideological deviance that the Don/Shotta carves his own space and finds freedom and actualization out of the confines of the marginalized spaces. (Hope 2006a, 119)

As a result of the violent leanings of the dancehall, more DJs emerged from among ghettoized youth. This emergence of ghettoized youth DJs produced a shift from the earlier celebrations of Jamaican nationalism to a class struggle between middle-class and poor youth. As a result, 'slackness' became a staple in dancehall lyrics. Stolzoff describes slack lyrics as dealing "with sexuality in an 'indecent' or crude manner. Lyrics were labelled slackness because they openly defied not only the hegemony of Protestant mores

as handed down by the established churches, but also the mores of the Rastafari, whose attitudes were based on mainstream notions of sexuality” (2000, 104–105).

From its beginning, dancehall culture evinced socio-political consciousness, hyper-heterosexuality, socio-economic class division, and violence. However, it is difficult to separate these elements: they are mutually implicated. At their centre is the actual music itself, the most ignored aspect by the Stop Murder Music campaign. The Stop Murder Music campaign focuses on the violence in the lyrics of specific dancehall songs however, as I shall continue to argue, over-state the actual threat the music poses. I will now turn to an analysis of the dancehall music’s sound system, which foreground deep bass registers (Stolzoff 2000; Lesser 2008; Alleyne 1988) and (what is interpreted as) aggressive-sounding vocal performances. The origin of dancehall music is rooted in more high register timbers, jumpy rhythmic guitar chord progressions and choral vocals—not unlike early reggae. However, dancehall music has changed significantly. Stolzoff claims that “the distinctive drum pattern, two-chord melodies, and electronic overdubs ... have become the distinguishing markers of what is referred to as ‘hardcore dancehall,’ as distinct from early- dancehall-style musical arrangements that used live musicians in the studio” (2000, 107). Dancehall’s current style prominently features repetition and distortion of synthesized drum-beats, two or three note bass lines, and deep throaty voices. Stolzoff continues:

The emergence of dancehall music was as much the result of a crop of new producers on the scene as it was to the brand of performers. Producers like King Jammy ..., Junjo Lawes, and Gussie Clarke were responsible for releasing some of the earliest dancehall music tracks. By the end of the

1980s, dancehall music began to sound very different from music of the early digital era. The use of more sophisticated synthesizers, drum machines, and samplers allowed sound engineers and producers to create more densely textured riddims, following a pattern used in dub music in the 1970s by other technological means. Also, the structure of dancehall songs changed from a strict reliance on recycling classic reggae instrumental tracks ... to ones that drew on the rhythms of Pocomania and Kumina, two Afro-Jamaican sacred forms, and musical forms such as mento and buru. (2000, 107)

Ultimately, the musical characteristics of dancehall are interpreted through Westernized ears as aggressive and as such, associated with violence and domination (Stolzoff 2000; Hebdige 1979).

The repetitive drum pattern and forceful sounding vocals in dancehall music bears similarities to North American rap and hip-hop riddims. Rap and hip-hop have seen much controversy, from many queer activists, for condemning homosexuals (Rose 1994; Gilroy 2004; Small 1987). This controversy parallels the controversy of dancehall music. An indirect and dangerous result of concurrent controversies of two predominantly black music genres can lead to a racialization process of homophobia. The emphasis on homophobia in these black-dominated musical genres risks presuming all black-oriented music genres as inherently homophobic. The danger is that a variety of culturally specific musical styles are essentialised into one aggregate, characterised most prominently by homophobia. All involved with the black genre music – musicians and fans, risk carrying the odium of homophobic tendencies (Stockton 2006).

The sound of dancehall music is conflated with an incitement of violence.

Although Johnson and Cloonan argue that although the incitement of violence can exist in the lyrics, this incitement will most likely not arouse violent actions amongst its listeners (2008, 140–141). Instead, the arousal exists in the sound of music and the ensuing emotional response it can evoke. In other words, arousal depends upon how that sound is received. In exploring causal linkages between incitement and arousal, Johnson and Cloonan suggest that the majority of arousal stems from the sound of music and not the lyrics themselves:

For moral crusaders against pop (and for some music scholars), the ‘text’ of a song is equated with its lyrics. ‘Hate music’ is identified through lyrics, as in the words of neo-Nazi rock or homophobic reggae. It is the lyrics which are cited when Eminem and gangsta rap, or extreme metal groups such as Anal Cunt are pilloried as exemplars of pop tastelessness.... It is the lyrics which are targeted by warning labels on records.... [However], lyrics, in fact, seem to be the least important component in pop music affect and arousal.... [Lyrics are] also the primary point of focus of all ‘moral panic’ exponents, from ‘Explicit’ stickers, to the jeremiads of police, church and media. Yet it is demonstrated daily that, in terms of overall exposure of audiences to such lyrics, these explicit incitements are rarely followed by violent conduct, and even where apparently so, the argument for a simple causal link is highly debatable. We suggest that the wellsprings of arousal lie in two other sources which can operate singly or in concert: sonority and non-

musical context, in particular relations of power which frame musical experience. (2008, 139–140)

Nonetheless the Stop Murder Music campaign solely addresses lyrics. In fact, the only justification the campaign has in contesting dancehall music is the lyrics. Johnson and Cloonan argue that the “homophobic lyrics [appear] to be part of a culture of anti-gay violence, but direct causal links between that violence and the music remain to be demonstrated” (2008, 103). Armstrong (*as paraphrased in Johnson and Cloonan*) suggests “that reading homophobic lyrics as actual incitement or endorsement of rape and homophobia is to miss the point, a failure of reading competencies appropriate to the genre, and of a sense of parody that is well understood by the music’s framing culture” (Johnson and Cloonan 2008, 103). If the “framing culture” of dancehall music understands these supposed anti-gay sentiments in metaphorical ways, and the incitement in the lyrics does not produce the kind of arousal of which sound seems capable, why the attempts at silencing it? The campaign lacks a proper analysis of precisely how music incites violence.

Ultimately, the SMM campaign believes that the music seeks to achieve heterosexual physical dominance over victimized queer individuals who have been murdered or savagely beaten because of their queerness. Understood in this way, the music stands as a symbol for queer oppression, instead of a form of expression from among the ghettoized youth in Jamaica. Although there is an undeniable element of queer oppression in some of the music, the music’s inception and intention is not to stand as a symbol for queer oppression. Saddling dancehall with this moniker would be similar to associating pop music with a symbol of love—love songs are an aspect of pop music, but

not the only aspect. Moreover, saddling an art form to stand for a symbol of a greater social process, oversimplifies the complexities of both the art form and the thing it comes to symbolize. In other words, using dancehall music as a symbol for queer oppression neglects to understand the creative and social origins of the music that are only loosely related to queer oppression, as well as oversimplifying the complexities that surround queer oppression in various cultures and societies.

This connection is not the fault of the music, but rather a manipulation of the music by the campaign to stand for something the music does not intend. The campaign, in their efforts to combat dancehall music, also highlight the actions of some dancehall artists who have been involved in queer hate crimes (Mills 2008, “Dispatches from Kingston, Jamaica”). This is not necessarily outlandish conclusion to make however, in doing so, they link the actions of the artist with their art, which is a problematic causal link. The actions of an artist, outside of their performances, do not necessarily reflect the messages they intend in their music (Frith 1996). A pop artist may sing about finding love or ending a relationship even though his/her personal circumstances differ from the message in the song. Moreover, an artist may experience something in his/her personal life which does not necessarily inform his/her musical creativity (Frith 1996; Shuker 1994). For example, in 1993 Maverick Recording artist Me’Shell NdegéOcello released her controversial album *Plantation Lullabies*, which featured songs that covered thematic concepts such as racism, white hegemony and pedagogy, drug abuse, ghettoization, and racialization. In one particular song entitled “Soul On Ice”, a song that she received much criticism for, NdegéOcello sings:

We've been indoctrinated and convinced by the white racist standard of  
beauty

The overwhelming popularity of seeing, better off being, and looking  
white

My brothers attempt to defy the white man's law and his system of values

Defiles his white woman, but my my, Master's in the slave house again

Visions of her virginal white beauty

Dancin' in your head

Your soul's on ice

Brother, brother

Are you suffering from a social infection misdirection

Excuse me does the white woman go better with the brooks Brothers suit?

I have psychotic dreams

Your jism in a white chalk line

You let my sister go by

Used to be customary to bow one's eyes at the sight of a white face

Konks and fade creams sad passion deferred dreams

I am a reflection of you

Black and blue pure as the tears of coal-colored children crying for

acceptance

You can't run from yourself

She's just an illusion

Black love anthems play behind white-skinned affection

New Birth stereophonic spanish fly let her cry.

But you no longer burn for the motherland brown skin

You want blond-haired, blue-eyed soul

Snow white passion without the hot comb. (NdegéOcello 1993)

A non-critical interpretation of these lyrics would suggest that NdegéOcello is condemning interracial relationships between black men and white women. However, taken in context with the political and social motivations behind the entire album, “Soul On Ice” is not a provocation to criticize those who engage in interracial relationships, but rather the internalized self-hatred that many black people have grown up with as a result of white hegemony (Hardy 1999). NdegéOcello has explained that the song is actually about the indoctrinated belief, instilled into many black psyches, that being white and trying to achieve white beauty standards is the only acceptable form of being (ibid). NdegéOcello is using the example of interracial relationships between black men and white women to express her own concern with self-identity and how that has been translated through a society that idealizes white standards of beauty.

Another example of how lyrical content cannot be directly translated literally is through the common pop love song. One specific instance is the song “A Thousand Miles” by Vanessa Carlton. In the song she sings:

Making my way downtown

Walking fast

Faces passed

And I'm home bound

Staring blankly ahead



Just making my way

Making my way

Through the crowd

And I need you, and I miss you, and now I wonder....

If I could fall into the sky

Do you think time would pass me by

'Cause you know I'd walk a thousand miles

If I could just see you tonight. (Carlton 2002)

Besides its hokey sentiment, the song clearly states “Cause you know I’d walk a thousand miles if I could just see you tonight” (ibid). I doubt that anyone has held her to the literal meaning of this song and required her to walk a thousand miles, nor is it logical to think she actually would ever walk a thousand miles for someone or something. However, when listening to the song, one does not berate Carlton for writing illogical lyrics that she has no intention of following through with. Instead, her lyrics are considered symbolic of a kind of sentimental romanticism. And yet, the Stop Murder Music campaign holds dancehall artists who describe violence against homosexuals in their songs to signify a reflection of their personal lives. Love songs are exempt from the backlash of literal interpretations, but dancehall songs, mired in their rich historical cultural beginnings, are not. However, it can be logically argued that love songs represent a positive social interpersonal interaction while some dancehall songs discuss violence against different sexual and gendered minorities. As a counter-argument, I ask: why are pop love songs afforded the creative license of being poetic or stemming from some greater romantic notion and not necessarily indicative of the artist’s personal feelings, when songs which elaborate

feelings of hostility and anger are received as literal professions of personal biases? As will be evidenced in the next chapter, the Stop Murder Music campaign interprets the lyrics of targeted dancehall artists in such a way as to outline and highlight a Westernized literal interpretation, thus manipulating the contextual meaning to mean nothing more than an avocation of violence towards homosexuals.

The moral panic surrounding dancehall is based on a misunderstanding of how music works and the unfounded causal links between the lived realities of the artists and the lyrics in their music.

## **CHAPTER 6: THE METHODS OF THE CAMPAIGN**

### **AND THE TROUBLE WITH DANCEHALL**

In researching the Stop Murder Music campaign, it became very clear that a major point of contention for critics of the campaign is the cultural contextualization the campaign completely disregards. SMM attempts to proscribe meaning and interpretations on a style of music that is developed and nurtured in a culture that is vastly different from that of the campaign. This dissonance must be addressed in this work. This section discusses three aspects pertinent to understand the cultural context of dancehall music. Prior to this discussion, I offer examples of the lyrics being targeted by the campaign, and how the campaign has translated them and added their own interpretations. I then begin to elaborate on the cultural context of the music by discussing how Cooper understands the violent lyrics as a metaphor for violence. In her interpretation, the understanding is that dancehall artists are not seriously inciting violence towards homosexual individuals, but instead, the homophobia in the music comes to symbolize a metaphorical battle between the downtrodden ghettoized youth and their struggle against the elite middle and upper class. Next, I discuss how the international notoriety of Buju Banton's song "Boom Bye Bye" propelled the music into the Western limelight, and how the interpretation of the words 'bati-man' and 'chi-chi man' assert certain negative connotations for how homosexuals and homosexuality are understood.

There are some serious consequences in the Stop Murder Music campaign's desire to combat and silence Jamaican dancehall music. Some of these consequences include how anti-homophobic advocacy can border on problematic racializations and potentially racist processes in its endeavours. In other words, the campaign may sacrifice

considerations of non-racialization in an effort to better relay their own agenda. It is these consequences that this paper seeks to investigate more thoroughly.

I now turn to the contentious lyrics that the campaign has outlined (and interpreted) as being violently homophobic. First of which is Buju Banton's notorious song "Boom Bye Bye," the song that ignited the Stop Murder Music campaign. The translation I am using, submitted by the campaign, is rather suspect in its interpretations of the lyrics in that they go beyond a mere reprinting of the original patois lyrics. They also provide an English translation, which Cooper deems to be quite biased and lacking context (Cooper 2004, 159–160). The campaign also goes one step further by offering interpretations of what they believe the lyrics signify. The original patois lyrics are underlined, the translations appear in regular font, and the explanations are bracketed and italicized. Buju Banton's "Boom Bye Bye" is translated as follows:

Boom bye bye/Boom [*as in gun sound*] goodbye goodbye

[*as in we won't be seeing you again, you're dead*]

Inna batty bwoy head/In a queer's head

Rude bwoy no promote no nasty man/Rude boys don't promote no queer men

Dem haffi dead/They have to die

Send fi di matic an/Send for the automatic [*gun*] and

Di Uzi instead/The Uzi instead

Shoot dem no come if we shot dem/Shoot them, don't come if we shoot them

[*as in don't come to help them*]

Guy come near we/If a man come near me

The his skin must peel/Then his skin must peel

*[as in pour acid over him]*

Burn him up bad like an old tyre wheel/Burn him up badly, like you would  
burn an old tyre wheel.<sup>20</sup> (Outrage! *Dancehall Dossier*)

Clearly, the campaign's objectives in its pointed translation is to manipulate the interpretation of the lyrics to emphasize a level of brutality that is abhorrent to Western sensibilities. These interpretations neglect to consider the intent of the artist or local cultural understandings that might not regard such lyrics in a literal manner—as I will discuss later (Cooper 1994, 435–436). In many cases, lyrics by artists are not meant literally however, the campaign asserts the literal translation in its explanations. By declaring that the line “boom bye bye” is literally interpreted as “we won't be seeing you again, you're dead” (Outrage! *Dancehall Dossier*) eliminates any alternative interpretations from others who are unfamiliar with patois or unaware of the rest of the song. The line could be a metaphorical way of expressing the artist's desire to not be around homosexuals, and thus expressing this desire by trying to scare them with metaphorical threats of violence. This cannot be determined because the Dossier offers no discussion on the multiple interpretations of the lyrics.

Another example of such manipulated translations published in the Dancehall Dossier include Elephant Man's song “Log On”:

Log on and step pon chi chi man/Log on and step on a queer man [*Log on is a type of dance using the right foot in a stepping motion as if to squash a cockroach – the lyrics boast about crushing queers*]

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<sup>20</sup> An explanation is offered in the Stop Murder Music Dossier outlining that a professional patois translator in Jamaica conducted the translations of these songs.

Dance wi a dance and a bun out a freaky man/Join our dance and let's burn  
out the queer man

Step pon him like a old cloth/Step on him like an old cloth

A dance wi a dance and a crush out a bingi man/Join our dance and let's  
crush queer men

Do di walk, mek mi see the light and di torch dem fast/Do the walk,  
quickly let me see the lighter and torch [*lighter and torch: makeshift  
aerosol flame thrower weapon*] (Outrage! *Dancehall Dossier*)

It is interesting to note the description of the 'Log On' dance as consisting of "using the right foot in a stepping motion as if to squash a cockroach" (Outrage! *Dancehall Dossier*). This description conjures images of the popular North American dance "The Twist" however, to describe it in such a manner eliminates any commonalities that may exist between (homophobic) Jamaican dancehall culture and Western culture, thus further distancing their 'othered' status.

Also, the other verses in both songs outlined above are not presented here (nor are they made available in the campaign's published Dossier). The other verses are not explicitly violent towards homosexuals and may in fact offer a deeper cultural contextualization if they were to be presented. However, the campaign has decided to isolate these stanzas when pleading their case. Presenting the song in isolated form (without the music itself, and without the full lyric) strips the song of any potential context that may not explicitly foreground the homophobia that the campaign is narrowing in on. The Dossier presents four examples of where Beenie Man expresses homophobia towards queers. The first is the song "Han Up Deh": "Hang chi chi gal wid a

long piece of rope/Hang lesbians with a long piece of rope” (Outrage! *Dancehall Dossier*). The Dossier offers no line other than what is presented above, in isolation. When we take into consideration Roy Shuker’s understanding that music cannot be separated or compartmentalized into neat tiny sections and pieces, the isolation of these lyrics from the rest of the lyrics, as well as from the music itself, can manipulate the reader into thinking there is a literal meaning behind the words this artist is singing (1994).

Another example comes with Beenie Man’s songs “Damn” and “Roll Deep”. First, I present the one singular line from “Damn”: “I’m dreaming of a new Jamaica, come to execute all the gays/I’m dreaming of a new Jamaica, come to execute all the gays” (OutRage! *Dancehall Dossier*). Second are the republished and translated lyrics from “Roll Deep”:

Roll deep motherfucka, kill pussy-sucker/Roll deep motherfucker, kill

pussy-sucker [*Pussy-sucker: a lesbian, or anyone who performs cunnilingus*]

Tek a Bazooka and kill batty-fucker/Take a bazooka and kill bum-fuckers

[*gay men*]. (OutRage! *Dancehall Dossier*)

The problematic lyrical isolations and reinterpretations go unnoticed by many activists and supporters of the campaign, but as Farquharson states (in reference to Devonish): “the researcher cannot divorce the speech events represented by the dancehall songs from their cultural context since the words (signs) while sometimes resembling English do not always coincide with the meanings which Jamaican speakers assign to them” (2005).

There are meanings in the intonation (from singing the lyrics) and symbolism (from the

choice of words in the lyrics) that may be glossed over and missed when these lyrics are presented in isolation from each other and from the music that they were intended to be sung to (Shuker 1994).

Regardless of the cultural origins that sometimes require a deeper consideration in understanding music, music functions in such a way that messages embedded in the lyrics are not necessarily a reflection of reality or actuality. As I have argued in Chapter 5, musicians use the creation of music as license to describe a variety of complicated (and some not so complicated) meanings by presenting unrealistic scenarios in their songs. Moreover, as DeNora, Green and Small argue, the reception and interpretation of music is vastly subjective (2003; 1997; 1998). Music helps inform the listener with social understandings done in such a way that the amalgam of the music must be considered for a proper consideration. The individual aspects of a song cannot be separated lest particular pieces of the meaning are lost. For example, take the song “I Feel it All” by Canadian recording artist Feist. In the song she sings:

I feel it all, I feel it all

The wings are wide, the wings are wide

Wild card inside, wild card inside

Oh I'll be the one who'll break my heart

I'll be the one to hold the gun

I know more than I knew before

I didn't rest I didn't stop

Did we fight or did we talk

Oh I'll be the one who'll break my heart



I'll be the one to hold the gun  
I love you more  
I don't know what I knew before  
But now I know I wanna win the war  
No one likes to take a test  
Sometimes you know more is less  
Put your weight against the door  
Kick drum on the basement floor  
Stranded in a fog of words  
Loved him like a winter bird  
On my head the water pours  
Gulf stream through the open door  
Fly away  
Fly away to what you want to make  
I feel it all I feel it all  
The wings are wide, the wings are wide  
Wild card inside, wild card inside  
Oh I'll be the one to break my heart  
I'll be the one who'll break my heart  
I'll end it though you started it  
The truth lies  
The truth lied

And lies divide

Lies divide. (Feist 2007)

The lyrics can be interpreted to depict a downtrodden author, bent on suicide to combat the hurt she feels from her lover having left her. The song is sad, and occasionally expresses despair, and to examine the lyrics in such a way would be to assume a very depressed and emotionally disturbed individual. However, if you listen to the song you will be surprised to hear an upbeat swing with catchy melodies, accented perfectly with electric guitars, sweet vocal harmonies, and twinkling vibraphones and pianos. The song itself does not sound disturbed, but the lyrics do. When the lyrics are taken into consideration with the music, the lines “I’ll be the one who’ll break my heart” (Feist 2007) can take on a meaning of empowerment, and although the singer may have been upset when she wrote this song, an intended interpretation could be that she is picking herself up from being devastated and is now going to be the master of her own fate. A misinterpretation can easily be made if elements of music are compartmentalized.

An opposite example of misinterpreting music without lyrics can be made with the song “Minerva” by nu-metal band Deftones. A first listen to the music only, you hear abrasive instruments amplified to the point of distortion, and a wailing and screaming singer singing seemingly nonsensical lyrics. A common interpretation is that the singer/band is aggressive and unhappy. However, when one reads and understands the lyrics a very different conclusion is made:

I get all...numb

When she sings it's over

Such a strange numb

And it brings my knees to the earth  
And God bless you all  
For the song you saved us...  
You're the same...numb  
When you sing it's over  
Such a strange numb  
It could bring back peace to the earth  
So God bless you all  
For the song you saved us...oh...  
For the hearts you break, everytime you moan...  
I get all...numb  
We're the same numb  
And it brings our knees to the earth  
So God bless you all  
For the song you saved us..oh...  
For the hearts you break, everytime you moan  
And God bless you all on the earth .... (Deftones 2003)

The message embedded in the song is one of redemption and beauty. The catharsis of the singer is apparent when you understand what he is singing, and how it's set against the abrasive and aggressive tones of the music. Therefore, music should not always be separated for analysis purposes for mistakenly attributing a false interpretation of the music's meaning.

Returning to the lyrics presented in the Dancehall Dossier published by the Stop Murder Music campaign, Tatchell and company do not rest with a literal translation of the lyrics; instead, they inject their own interpretations thus manipulating the lyrics' messages. These pointedly biased translations fortify the argument that Buju Banton and Elephant Man and Beenie Man are promoting the obliteration of homosexuals through what North American standards of decency would constitute as 'brutal' methods (Cooper 1994). There are continuous references to burning homosexuals—a purposeful reference to religious sacrificial burnings of witches, and various other morally questionable individuals—or using firearms to shoot them. However, to translate these lyrics and assign a North American interpretation of brutality to them without any regard to the cultural context in which the music originates is to do these songs a grave injustice. Carolyn Cooper, Donna Hope, Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, Mike Alleyne, and Agostinho Pinnock have all propounded a variety of interpretations for the meanings of these songs however, Cooper stands out as the most vocal, and subsequently the most contested.

Ultimately, Hope, Bakare-Yusuf, Alleyne, and Pinnock come to stand in opposition to Cooper's arguments, and as such, this next section focuses predominantly on Cooper. Cooper interprets the directing of gunfire and violence towards homosexuals in Banton's song "Boom Bye Bye" as a proclamation of heterosexual virility, with the gun symbolizing a penis and as an emancipatory tool for the ghetto-classed youth (1994). Cooper argues:

[T]he DJs often assume a badman pose: pure role play. Despite explicit reference to what sounds like frighteningly literal gunfire, Uzis and automatic weapons, "Boom By-By" does assume metaphorical

significance. Especially if we accept Shabba's metaphor of the gun as symbolic penis, we can see Buj's use of the gun in "Boom By-By" in a new light. In the final analysis, the song can be seen as a symbolic celebration of the vaunted potency of heterosexual men who know how to use their Lyrical gun to satisfy their women. After all, in Shabba's "Gun Pon Me" it is Susan and Ann-Marie who pick up the DJ's lyrical shell. The homosexual is safely out of firing range. (1994, 438)

This interpretation of gun violence as metaphorical and symbolic for a virile heterosexual male's penis, is reiterated by Pinnock who suggests that

[t]he black penis, ultimately, frees 'the people' from their repressed/oppresed conditions and become the crucial signifier which mediates the discourse's construction and performance of identity, as a result. The bigger the penis the better and more effective it is as a tool of liberation. Notably, however, in the heterosexual matrix of Jamaican society this liberation can only be achieved through sexual interactions with women. Jamaica's urban poor ritualize through entertainment, then, sexuality as a discourse of power in the society. Sexual violence, therefore, becomes the metaphoric liberation of the large groups of disempowered and disenchantd black men which is further mediated through the narrative's representation of the Jamaican middle-classes as 'the other.'(2007, 55)

What Pinnock, and to a lesser degree Cooper, are arguing is the notion of explicit and sometimes violent sex and sexuality as a product of the hypermasculinity that has the

potential to be a liberating force for the repressed and oppressed Jamaican ghetto youth—the heart and foundation of where dancehall music originates (Pinnock 2007; Cooper 1994; Stolzoff 2000). Moreover, they affirm that the production of dancehall music emanates from a specific ghetto class context wherein the state (Jamaica) has inculcated standards of sexual decency (Pinnock 2007; Alleyne 2006; Bakare-Yusuf 2006; Stolzoff 2000). The music with its sexually explicit lyrics and performances of hyper-heterosexual masculinity is a direct rebellion against these imposed national standards. Pinnock explains that:

[t]his includes, but is not limited to, postures of a rampant and very publicly advertised male heterosexuality as well as a vocal denunciator of male homosexuality. These identities evoke an anti-establishment masculine posture which re/create a context in which traditional nationalist imperatives are dismantled, and in their places are instituted a more indigenously defined discourse of (male/ghetto/Dancehall) autonomy. (2007, 52)

In addition to Pinnock's proclamation that dancehall evokes a "publicly advertised male heterosexuality" (ibid), Cooper attempts to convey how the stressing of virile hyper-masculinity in the music, is more a promotion of heterosexuality than a proclamation against homosexuality—homosexuality then, becomes only one thematic element in the enfolding advocacy of heterosexuality (Cooper 1994, 439). She explains:

Imported Western feminist notions of "misogynist" Jamaican dancehall culture may be constituted as yet another example of heterophobia--the devaluation of misunderstood local cultural traditions. Indeed, the implied

dancehall audience in Buju's song ["Boom Bye Bye"] is not gun-toting homophobic men but heterosexual women who have a vested interest in the DJ's peg. The more homosexuals there are, the fewer "real" men available to service the agile women...The "bum bai bai" here clearly becomes a gun salute to heterosexuality itself, rather than the inciting to violence against homosexuals. (1994, 444)

Cooper also explains that what is missed by the campaign is the understanding that dancehall music is not broadcast on Jamaican radio stations. Songs such as "Boom Bye Bye" are not broadcast for public consumption but rather forced underground to dancehalls (1994; Stolzoff 2000). In fact, any music which advocates violence towards anyone is not permissible for radio or televised broadcast (Stolzoff 2000; Cooper 1994). These songs are not actually a reflection of what the nation as a whole listens to, nor are they even indicative of the complete catalogue of the individual artists (Cooper 1994). She explains that it was the North American music market's obsession with the song's scandalous lyrics that gave "Boom Bye Bye" its notoriety and mainstream success (Cooper 1994, 441). The campaign conveniently neglects to mention how the international success of the music came to be. They ignore how and why Western audiences have embraced dancehall music. To understand that it takes the efforts of transnational media distributors and broadcasters to make the music internationally successful would open the campaign's target to all those involved in promoting the music. Instead the campaign chooses to focus solely on the artists themselves, as if the artists were not backed by the direct and indirect efforts of transnational marketing.

Although Cooper offers some interesting theories about the campaign's interpretations of dancehall music and the "supposed" inherent homophobia, there are some definite problems with how she comes to understand homophobia in dancehall music as not actually homophobia, but rather pro-heterosexuality. I now turn to the specific instances in which Cooper makes these proclamations.

The most contentious term in "Boom Bye Bye", and many other dancehall songs, is 'bati-man'. Although it can be interpreted in a variety of ways, Cooper understands the term as specifically implying homosexual anal sex and how this sexual act is used to identify the homosexual himself. Cooper argues that the term's literal reading:

encodes a very precise naming of the place to which the sexual propensities of the homosexual literally incline. In a synecdochic transfer, the part (the bati) comes to stand for the whole (the homosexual). The vivid Jamaican word 'bati-man', unlike the somewhat abstract English word 'homosexual,' illustrates the tendency of speakers of the Jamaican language to employ literal detail in circumstances where speakers of other languages, like English, might use abstraction. (1994, 438)

Cooper is offering a literal interpretation of 'bati-man' as a male who enjoys anal penetration. Thus, 'bati-man' alludes to the sexual act that only some homosexual men engage in. This allusion basically essentialises homosexual men as anal penetrators, and thus becomes their identity label. If we are to accept Cooper's interpretation of the term (of which she admits there can be a multitude), why is this word not attached to males who participate in heterosexual anal penetration? Why is the term only understood as a



homosexual act? Homosexuals did not invent anal penetration, nor do they exclusively engage in it. Does her interpretation traverse a range of cultural models of sexuality to refer generally to the passive partner in the act of anal penetration? In this respect, it would seem that the active partner, regardless of whether he penetrates another male or a female, would be exempt from this interpretation and the ensuing ridicule and opprobrium which accompanies the term.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, in challenging Cooper's understanding of "the place to which the sexual propensities of the homosexual literally incline" (1994, 438), I suggest that she is interpreting homosexual identity and its associated sexual practices in very narrow terms. To be homosexual does not necessarily imply engaging in anal penetration with other men.

Cooper argues against the abstraction of the English term 'homosexual' because of its occasionally ambiguous Western cultural implications. However, where "homosexual" remains abstract, I argue that Cooper's definition of 'bati-man' is much too rigid and narrow a definition to ascribe onto a vast community of people who engage in a plethora of sexual acts. In the above quote, she infers that all homosexuals engage in anal penetration. The identificatory processes of being homosexual in general is itself broad and rather abstract and not subject solely to one particular sexual act (Warner 1994; Butler 2004; Guidotto 2006). To narrowly define a community of individuals (at least gay men) through the act of anal penetration effectively diminishes the nuances and intricacies of many queer individuals' identities, both personal and social.

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<sup>21</sup> Much work has been done on the variety of sexual structures that exist in a variety of cultures that only position the receiver in the act of anal penetration as vulnerable to social denigration (Almaguer 1993; Ho 2000; Kulick 1997).

Another term that the campaign contests is ‘chi-chi man,’ which is used by many Jamaican dancehall artists. Farquharson presents a linguistic understanding of the term ‘chi-chi man,’ which is literally understood as man who eats wood. Farquharson explains:

*Chi-chi* is the Jamaican term for “the dry-wood termite” (Cassidy and LePage 2002 *quoted in Farquharson*), to this is attached the suffix *-man*. The true meaning of the compound cannot, however, be unravelled [*sic*] without the proper cultural and linguistic tools to do so. The [Jamaican Creole] word *ud* is homonymous and signifies both “wood” and “penis”; *chi-chi* is an insect which eats *ud* “wood”. Hence, a man who eats *ud* “penis” is a *chi-chi man*, in other words, a human termite. Currently, *chi-chi man*, which is also the name of a song, is one of the most popular terms for homosexual male and the many songs which include this epithet are gaining attention by international groups who would like to suppress the music and what it represents. (2005, 106, italics in original)

Farquharson presents an instance of how a literal interpretation of certain terms come to be appropriated by dancehall artists in a negative connotation. Farquharson explains the linguistic process of how terms in Jamaican dancehall come into regular use:

Jamaicans have made use of several of the word-formation processes available in Jamaican Creole and English, and even combinations of these processes: compounding, analogy, semantic broadening, derivation (affixation), clipping. For example, *botomologist* and *rompist* are formed through affixation by the addition of the popular English suffixes *-log(ist)* and *-ist* to the bases *botom* “bottom” and *romp* “rump” respectively. The

corpus shows extensive use of compounding in words such as *bati-man*, *biips-man*, *foni-man*, *mod-pusha*, and *pung-gai*, among others. Quite conspicuous is the employment of *-man* in several of the terms, a popular second element in many Jamaican compounds which signifies ‘a man who is or does or deals in/with *x*’, where *x* refers to the thing denoted by the first element of the compound. (2005, 105, italics in original)

In contrast to Cooper, Farquharson presents a more neutralized interpretation of how language comes to function for Jamaican dancehall artists. He also explains that because of state sanctions against the use of certain original derogatory terms associated with queer individuals, dancehall artists became more creative in their references to such sexual minorities (Farquharson 2005). Ultimately, Farquharson argues that the language used in many dancehall songs has cleverly conceived an affirmation of a pro-heterosexual identity amongst young Jamaican men associated with dancehall culture. However, where Cooper almost outright denies proclivities towards homophobia inherent in the term ‘*bati-man*,’ Farquharson only casually suggests that the terms are meant more as a proclamation of heterosexuality than a defamation of homosexuality—although the latter is still implicated in the language.

I present this counter-argument to Cooper’s interpretation of the term ‘*bati-man*’ as a way to balance my analysis of the Stop Murder Music campaign. Although there are processes of racialization inherent in the campaign’s methods to eradicate homophobia from Jamaican dancehall music (and culture), it would be irresponsible of me to ignore the countering homophobia or heterosexism that can be drawn from critics of the campaign. There is a complicated back and forth between campaign advocates and

cultural purists, and it is necessary that I balance (to the best of my abilities) these two polemical arguments.

Cooper also offers a culturally specific metaphorical understanding of the statement “all homosexuals must die” (translated from the Jamaican patois “aal bati-man fi ded”) as “an indictment of the abstraction, homosexuality, which is rendered in typically literal Jamaican terms as an indictment of the actual homosexual. The person, the homosexual, and the project, homosexuality, are not identical” (1994, 439). It seems that Cooper is invoking the religious rhetoric of “love the sinner, hate the sin” in this interpretation. Pinnock suggests that to dismiss or attempt to circumvent an interpretation of the lyrics as non-homophobic is misleading. He suggests instead that when ‘bati-man’ is invoked in the violence of specific dancehall music, the understanding is “[h]omosexuality as gender” (Pinnock 2007, 59). He argues:

what is ... not acknowledged is that the public and bitter denunciations of male homosexuality do not, by themselves, indicate the absence of homosexual practices amongst men and women whether in the Dancehall or elsewhere in the society. Notably, many of these people also subscribe to Dancehall’s hetero-normative masculinity/politics in varying degrees. Homosexuality as gender, it seems therefore, is significantly more important to the homophobic thesis expressed in Dancehall popular culture than a ‘mere’ question of the type of sex in which one participates, though this too is important. Male homosexuality, in other words, as a gendered identity appears to be of greater concern in the Dancehall rather than the actual practices of same. (Pinnock 2007, 59)

I wonder then if Pinnock is contemplating an overtly feminized and publicly vocal pronouncement of homosexuality, or if he interprets the disapprobation of homosexuality as arising from an identity subject position rather than the engagement in certain sexual practices? In other words, is Pinnock implying that the homophobia is directed solely at feminine homosexual men? Or, implying that to be homosexual means to be feminine? In either case, Pinnock is suggesting that the lyrics are indeed homophobic.

Regardless of whether the lyrics are attacking the individual homosexual or the project of homosexuality as a whole, both understandings can be distilled down to an abolition of homosexuals and the same-sex sexual acts in which they may sometimes engage, be it anal penetration or otherwise (Cobb 2006). Although the authors may have intended to suggest that the lyrics are a proclamation of pro-heterosexuality, this interpretation does not eliminate the inherent homophobia. Homophobia is implicated in the proclamation of hypermasculine heterosexuality. Moreover, to separate the 'project' of homosexuality from the homosexual person, as Cooper does, implies that they are separable and that the homosexual exists outside of the 'project' of homosexuality. To condemn only homosexual desire leaves queer individuals in a precarious position. How are those who identify as queer to feel secure in knowing that it is not they as individuals that incite such rage but rather, the acts and social movements in which they may directly or indirectly engage (or conversely be associated with), especially when it is these acts that might actually affirm their identity?<sup>22</sup> Homophobia may only be a thematic element

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<sup>22</sup> In poststructuralist debate one can argue for this division of subject position and social forces (Butler 2004), however, as Foucault would argue, the two exist in discursive imbricating fields where the identity of the subject cannot be easily (if ever) separated from the discourse that regulates it (Foucault 1978).

in the broader purpose of dancehall music<sup>23</sup> however, homophobia remains a vital inclusion to the work of these dancehall artists—an inclusion that cannot be ignored in the discourse of dancehall music and its distribution in Canada.

Farquharson also supports the claims made by Cooper and Pinnock (respectively) by arguing that:

threats [to homosexuals] are executed in a “to-whom-it-may-concern” manner whereby the act only applies to the speaker if the speaker meets or fails to meet certain requirements or expectations of the speaker. This way of indirectly insulting or threatening someone without calling names is encapsulated in the Jamaican saying ... (‘[I] threw my corn, but I did not call any fowls’) which is the equivalent of English “If the cap fits, wear it”. Most homophobic threats both within and without Dancehall music, take this “to-whom-it-may-concern” form i.e. they are not usually addressed directly to homosexuals, and so any punishment they promise only applies to H (hearer) if H is gay. (2005, 110)

In addition to understanding that the threats made in dancehall music are not meant directly to homosexual individuals, Farquharson, supported by Pereira (1994), explains how “[g]ay-bashing is one of the ways in which (young) Jamaican men construct a heterosexual identity—which is the same cultural practice embodied in the public performance done on stage by dancehall artists” (2005, 107). In other words, condemning homosexuality is vital for many dancehall artists in expressing their virility as heterosexual men. Masculinity in this sense is an action rather than a state of being.

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<sup>23</sup> The purpose being to advocate a kind of nation-saving heterosexuality as it is rooted in the ghetto youth of Jamaica.

Linden Lewis explains that “[m]asculinity is something men do, not something they necessarily define in any systematic way” (2007, 4). As such, masculinity for Jamaican men is constantly in a process of performing and doing.

The consequence of such brash procedures to highlight one’s masculinity (such as gay bashing) may be a result of what Lewis and Carr deem as the policing of masculinity (2009). Lewis and Carr explain that:

[I]ike most patriarchal societies ... Jamaica polices masculinity. Through socialisation, it determines what men are expected to do in their interactions with either sex in public and private. While many of the expectations of men are inflected by class, ethnicity, geography and religion, there are some overarching principles by which the behaviours of all Jamaican men are judged. In many ways, these behaviours are expected to meet standards set primarily by the religious establishment, which pervades all sectors of society. (2009, 9)

This policing of masculinity may be a catalyst for the rebellious nature of the dancehall ghettoized subculture. Lewis and Carr continue by explaining that homosexuality in Jamaican culture is an “always already present rejection” (2009, 10), and threatens the essence of how men are socialized—which is that they are “admirers and women [are] admired” (2009, 10). Understanding how heterosexual masculinity functions and how homosexuality is implicated in this process helps one to see the threat that homosexuality can pose on heterosexuality. Ultimately, homosexuality subverts the socialization of men as “admirers”, turning them into the “admired”—a position that most heterosexual men in Jamaica are not willing to accept.

Unfortunately, I am unable to properly address all the nuances that inform the discourse surrounding masculinity in Jamaican dancehall music. The focus of this research is to problematize the methods and motivations of the Stop Murder Music campaign and its neglect to take into consideration all the various aspects that are involved in understanding how music functions more generally. One such aspect is cultural and historical context. As such, the process through which Jamaican dancehall artists understand and negotiate their masculinity (in terms of sexual virility at the cost of condemning homosexuals) is a vital inclusion into this discussion. However, I offer these examples from the authors above to highlight some of the distinctions towards how men ensconced in the subculture of the Jamaican dancehall come to inform their masculinity in ways that are not necessarily apparent. My intention is not to offer new insight into this process of masculinity in regards to how it affects the production of dancehall music, but rather to highlight the complexities not directly evident in this discourse.

It is apparent that the cultural context in which dancehall emerges is a significant aspect to be considered by the campaign but, remains suspiciously absent from the methods it employs to combat dancehall music. Cooper offers some great insight into how the violence in the music is intended to be metaphorical. Moreover, the campaign must pay attention to the international success of the music and why there is such mass appeal. This consideration might help the campaign include media standards into its efforts in silencing dancehall.

Where I find trouble with the cultural contextualization of the music is in how homosexuality and homophobia are understood in the lyrical content. It is here where the contention lies. Although the violence might be intended as symbolic, the homophobia



abounds, whether it is through a proclamation of pro-heterosexuality or attempting to combat the 'project' of homosexuality. The homophobia in the music is undeniable, but the literal incitement of violence against homosexuals is questionable. This could imply a tenuous relationship between homosexuals and Jamaican dancehall artists, where the latter does not approve of the former's lifestyle but still tolerates the former's choices. This is not to say that tolerance is the best that Canadian queers can strive for, but rather that the attack the campaign has waged on dancehall music may be over-reaching the parameters of the issue, and consequently fueling the homophobia instead of eradicating it. Perhaps a more delicate approach could benefit both parties without igniting the underlying tensions.

## **CHAPTER 7: THE MOTIVATIONS OF THE CAMPAIGN**

The campaign's preoccupation with the incitement to violence and the moral panic that they argue will ensue from this incitement requires additional investigation. Why is there such a need to censor these artists? What underlying motivations are driving this campaign to such measures, measures which include: forcefully protesting the entrance of these artists into Canada (Adé Larcher 2007a); being rid of their entire musical catalogue on the basis of one or two songs (Eagle Canada 2008); informing sponsors of the content of these artists' music and presenting the sponsors with an indirect ultimatum that they cannot really refuse (ILGA 2004a); contacting Amnesty International or Human Rights Watch to investigate the behaviour and actions of these dancehall artists (ILGA 2004b); or contacting police officials to keep watch of these artists' while in Canada if they are allowed in (Adé Larcher 2007b). Adé Larcher even goes so far as to suggest that these artists' songs impede the struggle against HIV/AIDS in the African and Caribbean diaspora:

Artists like Sizzla continue to perpetuate the stereotypes that promote homophobia and discrimination in the African and Caribbean diaspora, which not only encourages anti-gay/lesbian violence, but also directly hampers the fight against HIV/AIDS in these communities. A recent report by the African and Caribbean Council on HIV/AIDS in Ontario (ACCHO) identified deep-rooted homophobia in Caribbean culture, which translates into the belief that HIV is a "gay disease", as a major barrier to addressing HIV with Caribbean diaspora communities. Allowing an artist such as Sizzla to enter Canada undermines the hard

work of groups such as ACCHO, the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black Cap) and the numerous other AIDS service organizations in Canada fighting the rise in HIV infection within the African and Caribbean diaspora in Canada. (Adé Larcher 2007b)

The campaign goes to great lengths to outline the depths of influence that these songs have in the global queer community.

I argue that there is both an overt motivation and an underlying structural motivation that fuels the Stop Murder Music campaign. The overt motivation revolves around the legal and human rights legislations the music supposedly infringes on. The underlying structural motivation concerns the conception of sexual exceptionalism, as espoused by Puar. However, before I discuss the underlying motivation, I will first address the legal argument the campaign uses in its endeavours to silence homophobic dancehall music.

As is evidenced by Adé Larcher in the letters quoted above, the principle motivation for silencing Jamaican dancehall music is that its incitement to kill homosexuals breaches Sections 318 and 319 of the Canadian Criminal Code. In Adé Larcher's letters he states:

This incitement of violence and murder offends Canadian law and values. In particular, we would like to highlight Sections 318 and 319 of the *Criminal Code* which make it a criminal offence to advocate killing members of a group based on their sexual orientation or to publicly incite or promote hatred based on a person's sexual orientation. In addition, Section 13 of the *Canadian Human Rights Act* prohibits communication of

messages that are likely to expose a person to hatred on the basis of their sexual orientation. (Adé Larcher 2007a)

In the ‘Hate Propaganda’ section of the Criminal Code, Section 318, which addresses instances of genocide, states that *advocating* the killing of a group of people (distinguishable by race, colour, or sexual orientation) is a punishable offence. If Cooper’s argument about the metaphorical nature of the incitement to violence in dancehall lyrics is accurate, then holding these artists accountable to this law is unwarranted. However, this incitement may still be heard by listeners as literal, in which case, a more careful consideration of lyrics and their function in music is necessary.

As is stated above, the process of performing music (or even listening to music) is not the same as public speaking or publishing dossiers which express the author’s bias. There is a shared common understanding and relationship between performer and listener that isn’t usually literal, but rather cultural and often times symbolic (DeNora 2003; Shuker 1994). If we are to understand music in this respect, which I am purporting, then the application of Section 318 of the Canadian Criminal Code is inapplicable because the music is not literally inciting violence towards homosexuals.

The campaign’s use of Section 319 of the Canadian Criminal Code is quite precarious. Section 319 states: “Every one who, by communicating statements in any public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace is guilty of ... an indictable offence” (Canada 1985). The incitement of hatred as is understood in the Canadian Criminal Code is qualified as to whether or not the incitement is *likely* to arouse a disturbance of peace. Considering Johnson and Cloonan’s argument about the inability lyrics have in arousing violence, it

seems as though homophobic Jamaican dancehall music does not infringe upon this section of the Criminal Code. Moreover, “a breach of the peace” is highly interpretive and can account for a plethora of actions. “A breach of the peace” can very well be understood as rowdy individuals who are slightly louder than they should be, but still have no intent to cause harm to others. If this is the intended interpretation the campaign has on what “a breach of the peace” means, then they are overstating the severity of the situation.

Although the overt motivations are apparent for wanting to silence homophobic Jamaican dancehall music, there also seems to be a form of cultural regulation underlying the campaign which concerns the queer sexual subject in Canada. Prior to my discussion of Puar’s notion of sexual exceptionalism and the ascendancy of whiteness, I must reiterate that the inclusion of this argument is meant suggestively. A detailed examination of Puar’s theories in relation to the Stop Murder Music campaign goes beyond the scope of my central argument, but could be developed in further research. In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Puar introduces the political and nationalistic conception of sexual exceptionalism. Puar explains:

National recognition and inclusion ... is [sic] contingent upon the segregation and disqualification of racial and sexual others from the national imaginary. At work in this dynamic is a form of sexual exceptionalism—the emergence of national homosexuality, what I term ‘homonationalism’—that corresponds with the coming out of the exceptionalism of American empire. Further, this brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of normative

gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects. There is a commitment to the global dominant ascendancy of whiteness that is implicated in the propagation of the United States as empire as well as the alliance between this propagation and this brand of homosexuality. The fleeting sanctioning of a national homosexual subject is possible, not only through the proliferation of sexual-racial subjects who invariably fall out of its narrow terms of acceptability, as other have argued, but more significantly, through the simultaneous engendering and disavowal of populations of sexual-racial others who need not apply. (2007, 2)

Although Puar singles out the United States, I propose that Canada is a comparable example. Canada's chartered rights for gay marriage and criminalization of hate speech and hate discrimination against queer subjects, is a comparable instance of sexual exceptionalism entangled with national ideals and racial segregation. Loosely applied to the Canadian chapter of the Stop Murder Music campaign Puar's comments may suggest that the campaign is predicated on a subjecthood that is specifically positioned within a nation where sexuality is manifested through constructions of homonormativity and racial exclusion (2007). This construction of homonormativity and racial exclusion is what fosters the sense of homonationalism, where homonationalism comes to signify the complicity that homosexual subjects have for "heterosexual nationalist formations" (Puar 2007, 4). In other words, homosexuals in their privileged status appropriate the constructions of morality and principles created by heterosexual subjects, for their own gain. The homosexual subject is then reintegrated into the nationalist ideals.

Puar continues by elaborating on the privileges of sexual exceptionalism arguing that subject identification along a sexual orientation axis contributes to homonationalist ideals and motivations:

Exceptionalism paradoxically signals distinction from (to be unlike, dissimilar) as well as excellence (imminence, superiority), suggesting a departure from yet mastery of linear teleologies of progress. Exception refers both to particular discourses that repetitively produce the United States as an exceptional nation-state and Giorgio Agamben's theorization of the sanctioned and naturalized disregard of the limits of state juridical and political power through times of state crisis, a 'state of exception' that is used to justify the extreme measures of the state. (2007, 3)

Puar explains that sexual exceptionalism, which is constituted by state juridical and political ideals, fosters a pernicious sense of entitlement to the claims of the nation, simultaneously producing identity and privilege in the nation's name (Puar 2007). In other words, subjects within the nation leverage the rights associated with its citizenship to reproduce notions of privilege and hierarchy against those who are not apart of the state. She continues to argue that:

queer secularity, and queer transgressive subjecthood in general ... is [sic] underpinned by a powerful conviction that religious and racial communities are more homophobic than white mainstream queer communities are racist. Those caught in the interstices, queers of color, presumably engage with white mainstream queer folks, politics, social spaces, erotic entanglements, and community events with vastly greater

ease than they do in their respective religious or racial communities, families, churches, rituals, celebrations, weddings (where the liberal coming-out telos functions as the barometer of acceptance). By implication, a critique of homophobia within one's home community is deemed more pressing and should take precedence over a critique of racism within mainstream queer communities. (Puar 2007, 15–16)

The process by which Canadian sexual exceptionalism constitutes and constructs queer personhood is ultimately a process of the ascendancy of whiteness.<sup>24</sup> Dancehall music that advocates the obliteration of homosexuals is thus an obstruction of the construction of Canadian sexual exceptionalism—an exceptionalism that generates a sense of righteous ethical entitlement and moral regulation (Grewel and Kaplan 2004). Because dancehall music threatens the construction of the homonationalist subject, it can be suggested then that Stop Murder Music (Canada) is imposing itself as a form of sexual and national regulatory police, responsible for safeguarding the national queer subject from foreign racialized threats. In fact, this call for international regulation is not so tacit if we consider some of the call to arms made by SMM (Canada) leader Akim Adé Larcher. Adé Larcher clearly states in his letter to the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship that:

[i]n the past, Canada has denied entry visas to individuals who promote racist violence and other forms of hatred. Canada now has the power and duty to forbid the entry of those who incite hatred and open violence

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<sup>24</sup> The ascendancy of whiteness is understood by Puar as “a description of biopolitics [which] links the violence of liberal deployments of diversity and multiculturalism to the “valorization of life” alibi that then allows for rampant exploitation of the very subjects included in discourses of diversity” (2007, 3). In other words, it is the notion that all sexual and racial minorities’ proclivities lie in their desire to achieve similar privileged national status as their majority white heterosexual counterparts.



against people based on their sexual orientation. Canada can and *must* be an international leader in the fight against social injustice by condemning hate and violence in this “murder music.” (Adé Larcher 2007b, italics mine)

The implication here is that Canada knows better and must be responsible to enforce its sense of moral decency upon a culture that disrespects queer individuals. Adé Larcher’s request thereby places Canada as a cultural regulatory force.

In addition to understanding the overt and underlying motivations of the campaign, it is also necessary to examine the threat that Jamaican dancehall music is purported to have on the queer community in Canada. There are two important aspects to be considered in this next section: the actual threat the music poses to queers in Canada, and the music’s infringement of Canadian legislation. The threat dancehall music imposes seems to be relatively insubstantial within Canadian borders.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, if what Johnson and Cloonan argue above is accurate—claiming that arousal of violence is not instigated through lyrics but rather performance and the shared social experience of performances—there seems to be even less direct causality of threat to queer individuals from this music (2008). Although the campaign does attempt to cancel scheduled performances by dancehall artists in Canada, the rationale for doing so concerns the homophobic lyrics and not the potential threat of violence that may ensue from the shared social experience of a musical performance. That is, they do not protest concerts by dancehall artists who do not include homophobic content in their repertoire even if, as is suggested in Chapter 6, these artists still proclaim a sense of pro-heterosexuality, which

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<sup>25</sup> This statement however, is not meant to understate literal threats that some have experienced in relation to the circulation of Dancehall music in Canada.

may include the decriminalization of homosexuality. The campaign is missing the central incitement to violence here. Instead of focusing on the lyrical content, perhaps the focus should be on concert performances and how they might incite violence against queers. This notion however is only suggested here and further research on how the performances of dancehall artists who sing about killing homosexuals, may provide insight on the threat posed to queers in Canada.

Ultimately, Stop Murder Music (Canada) is invoking a reaction to a threat that still has yet to manifest itself in Canada with any degree of urgency.<sup>26</sup> The campaign's efforts seem to emphasize notions of sexual exceptionalism while imposing an ascendancy of whiteness onto a decontextualized Jamaican cultural export. If we are to assume that this is occurring, then this process has two significant actions: first, decontextualizing the cultural export of dancehall music and holding it accountable to the Canadian Charter; second, the process of labelling the artists as 'homophobic', thus evaluating them along Euro-North American constructions of sexuality.

The former action is problematic considering that the music is not targeting or addressing Canadian queer subjects, something that is glaringly omitted in the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign. Nor is transnational success an intended goal for the artists. It is doubtful that these artists intended to announce their homophobic ideals in songs that were to be broadcast transnationally to nations who support queer rights. Many dancehall performers and promoters state how international success is secondary and subsequently less significant to the success that is met in Jamaica (Petridis 2004, "Pride and prejudice"). In fact, given the culture of the dancehall, meaning DJs have to prove to

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<sup>26</sup> Although there are documented cases of anti-queer hate crimes in Canada, there is no evidence to suggest that they are in relation to Dancehall music or performances.

their audience that they are deserving of respect, instances of international success can be detrimental to the success DJs enjoy in Jamaica (ibid). This local respect and success is much more important to the DJs than international notoriety (ibid). In Petridis' 2004 article "Pride and Prejudice: Homophobia in Jamaica's dancehall music industry" he interviews dancehall promoter Dennis Howard, who explains that dancehall artists are constantly gaining the approval of their audiences (ibid). The dancehall music scene in Jamaica does not function in the same way as the music industry in the United States or Canada. Artists in Canada and the US do not have to resort to shocking political proclamations to keep their audience engaged, whereas this holds true for all dancehall artists who want to succeed in Jamaica's dancehall music industry. As such, dancehall music is almost always intended primarily for Jamaican audiences, and peripherally for global markets. The campaign then may be targeting the wrong proprietors of the music. In other words, if international success is an unintended consequence to the artists' success, perhaps the campaign should focus its attention on record companies, marketing departments, and music promoters who are propelling these artists into the international limelight?

Although the campaign does occasionally communicate with these subjects involved in the globalization of Jamaican dancehall music, the campaign's approach still places the weight of the blame on the artist themselves, and never does it question the moral and ethical principles of the companies themselves. When Buju Banton received a 2009 Grammy nomination it was met with outrage from Tatchell, as well as queer activist group GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) (Evans 2009). In

Lyndon Evans interview with the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center Chief Public Affairs Officer Jim Key, Key explains:

We're shocked that Buju Banton, a singer with a long record of performing a song that glorifies the murder of gay people, would be honored with a Grammy nomination, regardless of the artistic merit of any of his work. Throughout his career, Banton has performed music that promotes a culture of violence against lesbian and gay people ... He is completely unrepentant, refuses to stop performing the song, and recently said, "There is no end to the war between me and faggots." Banton's music has helped foster such an anti-gay culture in his home country Jamaica ... It's an affront to LGBT people, and to all fair-minded people around the world, that Buju Banton was even nominated. We certainly hope the members of the Recording Academy will not bestow the prestigious honor of a Grammy on someone whose music promotes murder. (Evans 2009, "Outrage over anti-LGBT Buju Banton's Grammy nomination")

The article continues to outline the behaviours and criminal actions of Banton (his involvement with gay bashing, etc.) and does not in any way broach the topic of why the Recording Academy 'honoured' Banton with a nomination in the first place.

The letter by Niemi (2007) (previously mentioned in Chapter 4), which addresses Pepsi over their sponsorship of an Elephant Man concert, also tiptoes around the organization's implications in sponsoring such an artist, ultimately alleviating Pepsi of any responsibility for supporting said artist. The tactics of the Stop Murder Music

campaign intentionally lay responsibility on the artist without any consideration for how their music gained popularity in the global market. Subsequently, the campaign absolves those organizations, that support these artists, of any accountability in taking part in the anti-gay discourse that the campaign is working against.

In the same way that dancehall artists ascribe derogatory meanings onto queer individuals (such as all homosexual males engage in anal sex), the Stop Murder Music campaign holds dancehall artists accountable to the production of one or two of their songs in a vast music repertoire. Stop Murder Music (Canada) condemns the artist as 'homophobic.' This seems quite naïve. The endeavour to eradicate homophobia from these particular dancehall artists is an undertaking of a particular magnitude. This endeavour becomes more difficult when the campaign attacks these artists without acknowledging cultural contexts in Jamaica or, ignoring the context and time for when these songs were written.

A significant result of the campaign's efforts is the backlash from artists who are forced to adhere to the rules the campaign is setting out. Many artists interviewed have expressed their offence to the campaign and how the campaign vilifies them for songs they wrote and recorded when they were younger and less mature (Petridis 2004).

Dancehall promoters have also stated how they feel that due to its strong-armed methods, the campaign is achieving the opposite effect it intends. Dancehall artists who may have stopped performing their homophobic songs are reintroducing them into concert set-lists as a response to the campaign. In Petridis' 2004 article, he describes a meeting with local Jamaican dancehall artist Yogie:

Yogie is the most dismissive of the Stop Murder Music campaign's effect on the Jamaican record business. He laughs at the idea that the country's music industry might be in crisis.... He says that most reggae artists make a living in Jamaica alone, touring and voicing "specials" – tracks commissioned for exclusive use at Jamaican dances – and are at best unconcerned, at worst actively provoked by the campaign. "Artists are affected if they have a corporate company involved. You take an artist out of that and he doesn't care. He can stay right here and make more money on his computer. Artists might care if England was their food basket, but it's not like most artists go to England a lot – perhaps three times a year or less. And Europe's not the only market for reggae. There's Africa, Japan, South America. There's the Middle Eastern countries that listen and support reggae. And in the Middle East, they support a lot of the views being expressed here." (Petridis 2004, "Pride and prejudice")

The artists respond with defiance because the campaign is forcefully trying to restrict their creative freedom (Petridis 2004). Petridis goes on to explain that "[t]he Stop Murder Music campaign has had an effect in Jamaica, but not perhaps the one OutRage! are looking for. There has been a backlash against it, a hardening of anti-gay attitudes. Previously critical of dancehall artists, the church has now bonded with them" (2004, "Pride and Prejudice"). He continues to explain that when homophobic statements are made, even though they depict violence against homosexuals, that the lyrics are not meant to cause harm, but rather are an expressionist and metaphorical call to action

against homosexual lifestyle. Because the lyrics are not intended in the way that the campaign interprets them, Petridis explains that:

[p]erhaps the biggest [problem] is the matter of artists apologizing for the anti-gay sentiments in their songs. According to the OutRage! website, it is a prerequisite for ending the campaign. According to MacKenzie [a singer represented by Beenie Man's management company] it isn't going to happen. There is a widespread belief in Kingston that when the argument about dancehall homophobia first erupted in the early 1990s, Shabba Ranks, then the biggest star in reggae, made conciliatory overtures to pro-gay pressure groups and thus ended his career overnight. Faced with a choice between success in a fickle global market, or maintaining a fanbase at home, most reggae stars would apparently opt for the latter, believing that international success stems from success in Jamaica. "I think that almost all artists are of the opinion that an apology would have a negative impact on their careers in Jamaica," says MacKenzie. "Whether that is so, I'm not entirely sure. I think that Jamaican people might be more understanding of the international context in which the thing has been done. That said, I think the whole prospect of being accused of bowing is something that every artist is mindful of." (2004, "Pride and prejudice")

Obviously, the tactics that the campaign employs, especially the prerequisite of requiring dancehall artists to apologize for their past discretions against the LGBTQ community, are not working. Given the campaign's lack of cultural understanding for the origins of dancehall music, it is no surprise that Jamaican dancehall artists are responding to these

ultimatums with defiance and aggression—in many cases amplifying their disdain for homosexuals. The dancehall subculture in Jamaica is predicated on power and violence, where gang members are constantly at odds with one another trying to prove their superiority and dominance over the other. When faced with a foreign organization that requires them to apologize for expressing their dislike of homosexuals, a dislike that is entrenched in both Jamaican law and culture, it is not surprising that most of these artists are taking offence to these demands. Although some artists have signed the Reggae Compassionate Act, thus promising not to promote their anti-gay agenda anymore, almost all have rescinded their agreement by either writing new anti-gay songs, or performing old ones. Not only is cultural and musical contextualization significant in understanding precisely what the music is intending, but it is crucial in strategizing an effective plan to combat homophobia for the betterment of queers who live in societies where they are consistently persecuted. Moreover, in the specific case of Canada, an understanding of these cultural and musical origins is even more pertinent when we consider the lack of evidence that such music has had on fostering a negative backlash on the queer community.



## **CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION AND**

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign is, perhaps unintentionally, contributing to a neocolonialist form of cultural imperialism in its actions to silence Jamaican dancehall music. It continues to racialize Jamaican culture by aligning it with homophobic tendencies. Adé Larcher has stated that Jamaican dancehall artist Elephant Man “has become a *symbol of pro-gay hatred* in Jamaica and elsewhere [and] his presence in Canada can be perceived as a license to incite violence” (2007a, italics mine). If the campaign is concerned with symbols of violence against queer people, they must also consider the implications of these symbols. There is the risk of further symbolic connection between Jamaican culture and homophobia. This symbolic connection has profound consequences in the continued racialization of Jamaican people, which may include associating Jamaican people in Canada as inherently homophobic.

In this study I have attempted to problematize the Stop Murder Music (Canada) campaign and the consequences it has on further racializing a culture which already possesses the moniker of ‘the most homophobic country on Earth’ (Padgett 2006; Mills 2008; Petridis 2004). This continued form of racialization is an indirect result of the campaign’s neglect to assess the contested music in a more holistic manner—namely, considering how music functions as a complex whole rich with cultural and social significance.

First, I introduced the cultural context of the music’s origins and how the lyrics are interpreted by Cooper and Farquharson. Although insights into how the violence incited in the music is read as metaphorical are helpful in understanding the intentions of

the artists, the homophobia in the lyrics is undeniable. Next, I critiqued the methods employed by the campaign and how they may be prematurely concerned about a threat that does not exist. Moreover, the focus on violence in the lyrics is misdirected. Instead further analysis should be conducted on performances and the social atmosphere of dancehall concerts. Finally, I discuss the two primary motivations for the campaign to silence dancehall music: the legal infractions the music is guilty of in inciting violence against queers, and the underlying structural motivation, which may concern the concept of sexual exceptionalism.

Ultimately what has transpired is an ineffective lobbying effort in eradicating homophobia. Considering that the aggressive tactics the campaign employs have only aroused the accused DJs to amplify their disdain for homosexuals, perhaps a more nuanced approach is needed. First, the campaign could conduct fieldwork on the atmosphere of dancehall concerts in Canada and gather information on audience reception. Does the reception of the music in Canada arouse violence towards queer individuals? Or are the incitements to violence inconsequential to the enjoyment of the music? Can music be enjoyed without a direct cognitive conception of the messages embedded in the music? The answer to this is obviously, yes. Audiences have for years enjoyed music whose message is inconsequential to their enjoyment of it. Although the campaign has targeted artists such as Eminem and Jay Z (the former for his outright homophobic lyrics and the latter for his dismissive statements towards the LGBTQ community), many queer individuals support these artists and attend their concerts. Their songs are also played in predominantly queer clubs. These fans may or may not be aware

of the declarations of homophobia from each artist however, the homophobic content does not impede their enjoyment of the artists' music.

A consideration for the cultural context of the music may also be necessary, with a less aggressive and forceful tone in combating the music. Given that the majority of dancehall artists are faced with having to prove their dominance and superiority on a daily basis, perhaps a more approachable manner could be used to effectively end their tirade on the homosexual community. Maybe more attempts should be made to conduct open dialogues with the artists to better understand the intentions in their lyrics. Finally, the campaign could redirect their efforts away from the artists themselves and focus on media strands that enable such homophobic music.

Although the intent of the campaign is a formidable one, I cannot help but consider their methods to be inefficient in accomplishing the task they have set out for themselves. Now, having completed my research, the dueling principles that I spoke of in the introduction, although still present, seem somewhat more appeased. The topic is a contentious and controversial one and even though there is no clear solution to the massive complexities and considerations, there does seem to be a suggested path to follow, which upholds both the fundamental principles of the campaign (which is to end homophobia) and a respect for the artistry and cultural production of dancehall music. Whether this tactic is effective is beyond the scope of this work, but is still recommended for future research.

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