DREADLOCKS STORY DOCUMENTING A "STORY BEHIND HISTORY"

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Abstract. This article speaks about *Dreadlocks Story*, a documentary that treats why the Indians are entangled in Jamaican society and how Hinduism is a source of inspiration for the Rastafari movement. Based on a history erased from collective memory, the movie creates a steady conversation between the filmmaker, interviewees and the audience. Three components are altogether shown: the Rasta movement's own internal development of an ethos, the correspondence of Rastafari and Hinduism, and the rapprochement between Asian Indians and African descendants in wider Jamaican history.
What directly follows are the decision-making processes that guided the film's production. How does one translate experience into images? Then comes a part that addresses the role of the film at the crossroads between anthropology, as an ideological system, and film, as a medium for communication opposite to entertainment or art. "What does it mean to have made this film?" implies "What were my relations with this topic, as director-producer and scientist?" The mixture of film and anthropology has proved to be fruitful in picturing the need to go beyond the intimacy of individual scenarios for the purpose of understanding their place in the global system.

Keywords: Jamaica, India, Hinduism, Rastafari, indentured labour system, colonialism, slavery, dreadlocks, documentary film, anthropology.

Dreadlocks Story covers the surprising roots of Rastafari culture, entangled in the Hindu tradition. In three years, it has been seen in more than 50 countries and rewarded with multiple international Best Feature Documentary awards. This story, which has never before seen on film, articulates several levels. One of them is the "object" to be represented. Indian culture, even Hinduism, is steeped into Rastafari. Another level corresponds to the relationship between the individual and the represented object. There is a similarity in ways of life among Sadhus in India and Rastas in

Jamaica, their behaviours and beliefs, as well as their relationship with the British Empire. The last level is the film's act of inquiry. The film approaches two social identities, born out of the clear lack of documentaries about indigenous, Jamaican and Indian History. By embracing aesthetics of visual clarity, Dreadlocks Story explores the themes of identity, cultural heritage, human movement, discrimination, history and social stereotypes.

What does it mean to have made this film?

> The human scientist has had to learn how to relate self-knowledge of him- or herself as a multi-sensory being with a unique personal history as a member of a specific culture at a specific period to ongoing experience and how to include as far as possible this disciplined self-awareness in observations on other lives and in other cultures. (Mead 1976: 907).

The movie explains a state of reality, exposes social injustice, lends a voice to the voiceless and challenges public stereotypes. It can be used to foster change in both attitudes and social behaviour, in an attempt to give a fresh impulse to popular education and the spread of culture, as well as to engage the participation of communities in tolerance. It can be also used to overcome the lack of discussions on the relationship between film and research.

Dreadlocks Story undertakes a multi and interdisciplinary approach to an encounter of cultures. As the director and producer, my background and knowledge are inexorably stamped onto its product, its process, and its production. The relationship between the subjects and the audience tie to my responsibility to make the world a better place whilst integrating knowledge, research, reflection, and practice. In encountering others, I also became responsible for them. Several perspectives are exhibited: the use of visual means, the concept of lifestyle, elements that are consistent throughout different belief systems, culture in its broadest sense, the anthropologic encounter, the weight of human relations, and the construction of history.

The movie was made with a ridiculously low budget for two primary reasons, one accidental and another intentional: a lack of funding from institutions, which reflects on the dearth of available resources for these topics; and as a way to avoid dependency on investor's needs, such as a particular profit. Having no predictable dilemma, *Dreadlocks Story* engenders enough bewilderment and concern. I was not willing to work on a piece that could have been ignored, rejected or tossed aside, with money made to be the explanation. I hence took charge of the production.

How does one translate experience into images?

> When you are dealing with people whose sense of space, place, body movement, and event are different from your own, how do you know what you are looking at and when to turn the camera on or off? It is only possible to explore these questions in the field when the anthropologist is freed from the economic restraints of professional filmmaking and the need to produce a marketable product (Ruby 1998: § 9).

In the same way that the film was an exercise in visually portraying the intricate cultural processes embedded in community culture and cultural encounters, this paper records the very act of making it, the decisions that guided the production and examines the fluid journey between film and anthropology. The project pivoted on the agreed idea that Leonard Howell (1898-1981), recognized as the founding father of the Rastafari movement, used a Sanskrit pseudonym from the outset of his teaching to desperately poor Jamaicans trapped into mental slavery in the 1930s. The initial assumption was that the encounters between Indians and Afro-Jamaicans must be considered in terms of visual anthropology and thence unveiled as such.

NO FICTION, NO TALE

Dreadlocks Story was inspired by a true and doleful history that arose during the British colonial period and borne from the Trans-Atlantic

slave trade. Despite an erroneous impression on its topics, this 123-minute movie has been thought and made to underscore the ignorance of Indian enslavement to the Caribbean. Alongside African heirs living in the region, it introduces Indians under the spotlight as those who were turned into slaves by the British colonists. Three components are altogether shown: The Rasta movement's own internal development of an ethos, the correspondence of Rastafari and Hinduism, and the rapprochement between Asian Indians and African descendants in wider Jamaican history.

For a considerable time, studies on the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean have been overshadowed by works focusing on the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and the brutality meted out to African slaves on the sugar plantations. Even today, historical works on the Caribbean tend to portray the region as predominantly Black, although Indians form a sizable percentage of the English-speaking Caribbean. It was only in the 1980s that scholarly attention was given to these enterprising people, coinciding with the 150th anniversary of their presence. In Jamaica, Ajai Mansingh and Laxmi Mansingh were the first researchers who did the spadework for embarking upon a larger understanding of Indian presence. *Dreadlocks Story* benefited deeply from their knowledge. Much of the analysis they provided was invaluable, as it has never been recorded on film.

When emancipation arrived in Jamaica in 1838, the British had occupied the island for almost two centuries and were well settled in the Indian sub-continent for more than two hundred years. Once African slaves were freed, the British faced a dilemma of the workforce on their whole Empire of sugar plantations. They invented an indentureship system to migrate the workforce population from India, which happened to be a "new system of slavery" (Tinker 1974: 18).

Indians were reluctant to go anywhere out of their motherland. Recruiters forced them to get on board, using nefarious methods

and outright deception. The oppressive British colonists and wily recruiters in India with the silent complicity cooperation of the Jamaican authorities sent a total of 36,312 people between 1845 to 1917 for working on sugar plantations, then later on banana ones across the island of Jamaica.

Indians represented a tractable, disciplined and accustomed labour force to plantation agriculture under harsh tropical conditions. The planters never stopped reiterating the importance of Indian workers in restoring the control they had exercised under the iniquitous Trans-Atlantic slave system, as well as in resuscitating the sugar and banana industries in Jamaica; they were necessary to prevent impending ruin.

Repatriation to India after a few years of service in Jamaica was a wrong persuading and motivational argument used by recruiters to convince unsuspecting workers. The colony was actually bankrupt and could not pay to charter the ships back to India. Indians had to pay to return home. Plenty of them so stayed in Jamaica, increasing de facto the Indo-Jamaican population by the time of the abolishment of the indentureship period.

Most of the Indians were Hindus, a low percentage (12%) were Muslims and three people declared to be Christian. Indian cultural persistence ensured the continuation of Hinduism. It created a sense of unity and solidarity and prevented the powerful plantation system from reducing them to mere puppets. Parochial Hinduism and its literature that nurtured the workers simultaneously became their mental and spiritual refuge just as well as their social and cultural cement in Jamaica. In establishing an independent collective state of mind and building up resources for surviving in the depths of oppression, Indians allowed a new social development to take place in Jamaican society. They bore a new life condition and befriended the Afro-descendants labourers. Indians introduced Hinduism and their mystical tradition to Jamaica, creating a cross-cultural intermingling that would come to have a profound influence on the development of the new cultural movement known as Rastafari.

Jamaican society had never been quiescent, neither in slavery nor freedom, but the 1930s saw a quickening of the people's energy. The end of slavery did not entail the end of colonization. Slavery produced both a system and an attitude of mind. In the hundred years after slavery ended, one of its worst effects to almost all workers was around the issues of identity. Concomitantly, although Jamaica was still in the possession of the colonial authorities, some leading men were discovering themselves and their power to build the island anew. The most prominent of them was Leonard Percival Howell, alias "The First Rasta". With a visceral refusal to be silenced and to co-exist with the tyrannical colonial government, Howell first initiated to speak about Rastafari.

Rastafari encourages a response from African heirs through which they could recover and rebuild their culture suppressed by brutal European domination. It also centrally promotes the belief that everyone is able and divine. With Rastafari, Howell challenged all forms of control. He struggled to establish black consciousness and cultural identity. He sought to empower and liberate his compatriots while pushing them to take responsibility to eschew dependency through self-sufficiency. A lot of people followed his enlightened lessons, in particular women and Hindus.

Besides immersing himself in Indian culture, interplaying with philosophers, Howell was assisted by Laloo, an Indian, concurrently a bodyguard and a sort of guru who is credited with helping him to stir an intermediate culture that borrowed from mystical Hindu beliefs, practices, and language. Howell also assumed a Hindu identity by changing his name to Gagunguru Maragh, "the Great Teacher who can see beyond the nature of matter". He furthermore signed *The Promised Key*, a compilation of ideas found in Back-to-Africa movements that existed earlier, and possibly written when he was in jail then published once released in 1936, with this new name – shortened in "Gong".

In 1939, Howell purchased a land called Pinnacle, designed to be a free self-reliant community for his followers. Ritual components

of Rastafari began to manifest there, marking a new stage in the movement, which solidified its ideas and tone until today.

Rapidly, Pinnacle became the subject of murky persecutions. Police raided it many times and arrested several of Howell backers. In 1958, the Authorities destroyed the entire community, causing an exodus of Rastas throughout Jamaica, then forcing many to settle into the slums.

From the start of his movement, despite all opposition, Howell never lost sight of the importance and responsibility of enhancing the people's mind through culture.

The consciousness of Rastafari forges a counterculture that triggered a dramatic cultural change, stamped with rejecting normative social conventions and physical markings to represent the history of struggle, survival, and contention. It offers a meaningful outlet inspired by Hinduism and a constructive release from oppressive social and psychological conditions while giving rise to new social coherences, chiefly by the way not interfering with nature.

Hindus operate in a system whereby the human being can become divine, if he lives well, through which rituals and sacraments create a communion with God. Quite similarly, Rastas believe that at the core of each individual there is a divine self, and this is exactly the initial teaching of Howell who alleged that all sons of slaves were not slaves, but children of God.

Under the horrors and burdens of slavery, forced migration, oppression and persecution, Indians and Afro-Jamaicans, who were treated as "objects", committed to creating a new form of self-expression, and to founding a new vision of identity, which led to transcultural awareness.

Dreadlocks Story contributes to the assertion that the links between Hinduism and Rastafari cultures are powerful symbols of perseverance and persistence against all forms of enchainment and stand out for an idiosyncratic individuality of oneness. The role

played by Indians in Jamaica importantly reminds that abducted people in the Caribbean have not come only from Africa.

The social acceptance of Indian culture in Rastafari raises points and counterpoints. If socialization is the process by which society achieves cultural continuity and perpetuates itself, then it is counterproductive to exclude elements of Hinduism from the framework that is imparted to Rastafari posterity. The historical documentation is significant enough that it would have been a grave misgiving not to show this relationship on film.

MAKING-OF

The making of *Dreadlocks Story* occurred in two years' time and across four countries: France, India, Jamaica, and the United States of America. The production has been shot in English, in French, in Hindi, and in Jamaican Patois by the way of four crews to whom I intentionally collaborated with, one in each country. Their involvement was critical for my reflexive directing. Plenty of other people have made their input, with up to 40 people composing the international production team.

Editing is the essence of filmmaking. Anything can be recorded. But the way the material is handled it is critical. Filmmakers need to find a balance between allowing the images to tell the story and providing an explicit context to the audience. There are different editing styles of all film genres like there are different ways to examine what happens to the footage once it is shot, which derives from how the realities are captured. Karl Heider, a visual anthropologist, speaks of distortion whatever those are in front of the camera and/or in the use of camera style and techniques and/or again in the use of editing. "Cinema has developed primarily as a medium for imaginative statements in which questions of scientific-type accuracy are often irrelevant" (Heider 1976: 7). Most anthropological filmmakers so suppose that the camera, properly handled, is the best means of objectively recording data free from

the subjectivity distortions.

Dreadlocks Story has been edited throughout a successive chain of people telling the story, speaking several languages, belonging to various cultures, embracing assorted beliefs, having values and expressing them at many levels of knowledge, either through experience or attainment. The interviewees exchanged their knowledge through the "static" camera, mounted on a tripod that does not tilt, pan, zoom or in any way move. This is assumed to be the most "scientific" technique and one that is less distorting and more "truthful" in the recording of "natural" behaviour than other camera techniques (Mead 1975: 10).

The film displays a horizontal construction of the similarities in ways of life between Sadhus and Rastas, enlivened by the context of Rastafari's emergence and the reasons for Indian presence in Jamaica in the colonial era. The whole project called my authority into question. The challenge comes from having to defer to the cultural authority of the people about whom the film is being made. I had to win the faith in my integrity, honesty, and competence to discuss with them in front of a camera while placing my confidence into their hands in order that they do not interfere in the editing process.

The production has been materially conceived as a meshing between audio and image, subtitles-translation and speech.

SPEECH. The film has no voiceover. Thirty-eight interviewees evoked their standpoints directly to the audience with no linguistic counterpart. Each interview was videotaped in the simplest environment - as it was - without *mise en scène*, only using natural light. Each person had a distinct approach to feeling at ease in front of the camera (singing, smoking, laughing, responding directly or dodging my questions). All of this gives *Dreadlocks Story* a richer and more personal spin on history.

The casting is made of famous and rarely interviewed people (Sadhus, Sons of Howell, Elderly Rastas, pioneer researchers on

Indian presence in Jamaica). All brought together in this unrivalled piece must be considered as the first and unique archival document of their testimonies and knowledge.

The purposes of the interviews were to uncover how Rastas saw dreadlocks, how they regarded Hindu influences in Rastafari history, how they expressed their way of life, and what discriminations they had and still have to face as members of an indigenous group minority. The interviews chimed with how Sadhus in India talk about their way of life.

Writing a script for a documentary film before talking to the film's participants is equivalent to thinking of the answers to the research project before initiating the actual cogitation. It makes the entire research process biased and, to a point, irrelevant. This is not to say filmmakers should not research, brainstorm, or develop potential shot-lists before travelling. *Dreadlocks Story* was not made on the basis of a script. Instead, the narrative generated itself in a natural way by allowing the interviewees to tell their stories.

Humour dissolves the barriers on sensitive and reactive topics. In *Dreadlocks Story*, it serves to negotiate both about the unknown and known revealed facts. Some of the charismatic and funny interviewees delivered messages with efficiency and effectiveness. The ability to achieve a comedic tone is not exclusive to the hilarity of the chosen subject matter. Nonfiction films should be amusing and witty. It is a means by which one imbues sensitive themes with expression and emotion. Laughter is a way to alleviate the pain, of what is known to be the truth. Laughter is further a highly sophisticated social signalling system, helping people bond, triggered by embarrassment and other discomforts.

I adjusted myself to the participants to let them express their story, as they desired. I minded getting a gender balance in speakers. The result pictures the reality of practices in India of Hindu asceticism and in Jamaica of Rastafari. Women sadhus are not many, and surely not used to talking in front of a camera. None have been interviewed. They refused to partake in an interview precisely in

presence of the camera. They nevertheless represent a real component of whom they incarnate in India. Although living on the outskirts of mainstream society, they are managed by groups of men, replicating the larger society driven by a prevailing patriarchy.

Generally, Rastafari is associated with a very traditional conservative patriarchy. The dominant discourse is that women are somehow not equal to men. I found myself in situations in which I had to obtain the approvals from husbands to possibly speak with their wives. I often ended up with refusals with unclear motives. This is a strong evidence that the Rasta movement had become discriminatory by gender.

On things considered, I had not faced difficult moments with anyone. I have collected anecdotes, which had no negative interferences or bad effects on the production. A husband had a hard time to understand why the idea to speak with his wife would make me thrilled without exchanging with him. We agreed that I could speak to both of them even though I sensed he wouldn't honour his word. I first talked with him to such a degree he conclusively decreed: "My wife would not have more things to add. I have told you everything!" There is always a high risk that people reverse their decisions in particular when the gender and position of each interlocutor are dissimilar or/and the interviewee seemed suspicious about the interviewer's intention. Whereas I hoped to get a gender balance of the Rasta population to depict a diversity of persons, this husband did shed light on the fact of this reality of male chauvinism being a component of Rastafari. Because *Dreadlocks Story* must show it as such, I spoke with five unmarried Rasta women. Fundamentally, working on such sensitive and taboo topics, the interviewer cannot and should not dodge both representation and incarnation of who s/he is for her/his interlocutors.

SUBTITLES/TRANSLATION. There is no narration. A succession of people tells the story in a "put-together" fashion. Giving a voice to

the "indigenous" to create a feeling of inclusion, reducing the commentaries, instead of distance, to beget a "us" versus "them" would have been basically counter-productive to my opinion of what a documentary can transmit. Though the voice-over ensures a function of commentary in documentaries, a rupture of style has emerged with Cinéma Vérité in the late 1950s, in developing, in principle, neither commentary nor voiceover. This privilege of captured sounds underscores the disappearance of voice-over.

Jean Rouch, considered as one of the pioneers of visual anthropology, said that oral commentary ages faster than images, which, on the contrary, acquire with time a greater documentary value. The editing choice of *Dreadlocks Story* without voice-over inherited this concept: spoken words are incapable of translating "intangible aspects of culture" captured by the camera. Spoken words cannot replace the richness of audio-visual communication. The film basically incorporates multiple dimensions of language and experience to the point that emotions and feelings participate in the elaboration of its meaning. Regardless, subtitling has been the recourse.

Subtitles enhance and bolster the audience to follow the voice-over free narrative, rather than negate images. Proponents of the subtitling method claim that this way of adaptation is more natural and realistic because it leaves intact the voices of the interviewees. Subtitling is different from other types of translations in many ways. It does not simply consist in translating a text from a source language into a target language. It also involves a shift from oral to written language. Shifting from one semiotic system to another, although problematic and limiting, subtitling is a major aspect of *Dreadlocks Story's* creation.

Written words used for subtitles do not simply translate the spoken words, but else, at the same time, they allow to share the visual and audio to the audience. Subtitling increasingly intercedes for the integral element of the content. Space and time limits make the decisions hard about what to omit and how to do it. The

conciseness is essential while the subtitles must have an equal informational value as the original text (Koolstra et al. 2002: 327).

Titles cards appear intermittently throughout the film, notably marking the temporal and thematic passage from one sequence to another. In a similar way to subtitles, the titles cards are of use the audience to follow the voice-over free narrative.

IMAGE/AUDIO. The speeches recorded structure images, whilst what has been recorded overpowers the soundtracks (Chinon, 1994). In *Dreadlocks Story,* images and sounds can be distinguished whereas they illustrate new ideas. The film combines assorted images, snippets of newspapers and excerpts of archives, photography, videos, original designs, extracts of songs, poetry, musical tracks, and silence. This collection of images, sounds and footage generates a dynamic and engaging arrangement.

Sound carries the story. Audio even played a crucial part, more than anything else. It is composed of a variety of sounds and musical tracks from reggae, traditional music, melody, instrumental, world music, jazz and ambient music, performed by artists located around the world. Besides, gestures, gesticulations, and postures eased to illustrate some comments. A Sadhu is cooking vegetables when expounding the reasons for his vegetarian diet perfectly represents one of these moments (Aïnouche 2014: 44:38 - 44:59).

Distinct levels of aesthetic and conceptual complexity made filmmaking *Dreadlocks Story* inherently enjoyable. One of the joys of being a scholar and filmmaker is to craft meaning and understanding from material where significance is not immediately visible. Being able to layer these meanings in a visual mode/story was really one of the pleasures that I have had in processing the film. It is likewise akin to creating a puzzle, and only those "who have eyes to see" infer the meaning. Thereby, interrelating with levels of understanding gave me the feeling to speak to plenty of people.

BETWEEN ANTHROPOLOGY AND DOCUMENTARY

A glance between anthropology and film disciplines, through the exemplification of *Dreadlocks Story,* gives reason to Ruby, who warns that "reflexive or methodological statements are lacking in anthropological film for the same reasons that they are absent from written anthropology: there is a conflict between what anthropologists do and the philosophy of science they espouse" (1980: 155).

SLIPPAGES AND INCONGRUITIES BETWEEN DISCIPLINES

As the science of alterity, anthropology has much in common with filmmaking. It is a medium to visualize alterity. Anthropology and photography emerged around the second half of the 19th century. Historically, the anthropologic film was meant to serve instructional purposes. Visual research methods are not conventional in anthropology, much less in the cross-cultural anthropology. Many anthropologists regard film as an adjunct or marginal activity to mainstream science. Heider interrogates: "What is an ethnographic film?" The term itself seems to embody an inherent tension or conflict between two ways of seeing and understanding, two strategies for bringing order to (or imposing on) experience: the scientific and the aesthetic" (1976: ix).

Despite milestone slippages and incongruities between the two disciplines, there are some reassuring overlaps between (ethnographic) anthropology and (documentary) filmmaking fieldwork. Methodologies look to document and understand human experience through careful research and the willing participation of participants. Both struggles with issues of power and representation of their interviewees. Thoughtful anthropologists and filmmakers worry about the ethical consequences of the final product. The fusion of these strands is a central ethos, and indeed an ethical stance, which is characterized by creative and productive dialogues between participants and filmmakers as collaborators. Films can

play an instrumental role in the advancement of an academic discipline, adding to existing substantive knowledge and theory.

Academic anthropologists have for a long time turned to film, and more recently to digital video, to represent empirical knowledge. Scholars, however, have been unkind toward filmmaking as an interpretive practice. Filmmaking remains a marginal activity. Writing as a mode of communication is vastly thought superior to visual modes for the scope of transmitting abstract, conceptual, and theoretical material. Book and article writing is an infinitely more profitable career choice than film for academic anthropologists and ethnographers, emphasizes Henley (2000). Scholars have somehow viewed film with some scepticism - because of the inherent subjectivity and the semiotic limitations of the audio-visual mode (Pink 2006, 2007) - as of late more and more academic anthropologists have come to agree on film's remarkable potential to express matters otherwise difficult or downright impossible to convey through other modes (Bates 2014; Suhr and Willerslev 2012).

How could it have been foreseeable to listen to an elderly Rasta (who has since passed away) singing popular rallying songs from the 1950s in Jamaica on paper? *Dreadlocks Story* lends credence to the idea of filmmaking as an ethnographic tool, as it gave opportunities to the voiceless to be heard and equally preserves unique records for future generations, which alone will be massively important in bringing ethnological knowledge into the limelight.

There is possibly a technical difference between films made and produced by anthropologists, and films produced to be explicitly ethnographies. *Dreadlocks Story* is somewhere in between the two extremes of perspectives. By necessity of people's ways of life, the film is confined to nonfictional accounts and indebted to the documentary tradition. Involvement with the people being studied through fieldwork and interviews, empathic role taking, and proper contextualization is sufficient for a film to be considered anthropologic. Curiosity is the basic impulse that drives

anthropology, and in response to this query, *Dreadlocks Story* is "a film made with real elements". Even during the post-production stage, the material was still spurring investigation, rather than conforming or purporting to have achieved sufficient knowledge about the subject. Whence, at all stages, this documentary engenders a conversation between the filmmaker, the interviewees, and the audience. The work content carries more importance than the idea of film as entertainment or art.

REFLEXIVE ETHNOGRAPHY

Every anthropologic documentary filmmaker is an educator. And, everyone who makes an ethnographic documentary film is on some level teaching about people and should be ethically accountable. Within this prism of accountability are the filmmaker's own subjectivity and reflexivity. Ruby incidentally asserts that: "filmmakers, along with anthropologists, have the ethical, political, aesthetic, and scientific obligations to be reflexive and self-critical about their work" (2005: 34). He suitability applies the three tiers of producer, process, and product to the concept of reflexivity in documentary filmmaking. Being reflexive means to structure a product in such a way that the audience assumes that the producer, process, and product are a coherent whole. The producer unveils what caused him "to formulate a set of questions in a particular way, to seek answers to those questions in a particular way, and finally to present his findings in a particular way" (Ruby 1980: 156). These revelations of the producer on the process were infrequent until recently. They were deemed to be confusing and inappropriate to the audience.

> "For whom, and why, have you made this film? Rouch, who I poignantly echo, answers "My first response will always, strangely, be the same: For me" […] "Film is the only means I have to show someone else how I see him. For me, after the pleasure of the cine-trance in shooting and editing, my first public is the other, those whom I've filmed" (2003: 43).

This means that, as an anthropologist and filmmaker, I have the ethical obligation to anticipate such encounters and ensure that I am equipped with enough skills to negotiate with others in a way that, at the very least, does no harm.

How can certain stories, voices, and values be made powerful by documentary films? *Dreadlocks Story* mobilizes ethics. Its audiences feel differently about the social relation present that underpins Indian culture in Jamaica at the era of Rastafari's genesis, namely the presence and influence of Indians, and so act as a focal point for cultural scrutiny. The overarching goal of the film is to provide a glimpse into some of these social and cultural influences affecting the difference of opinions on the so-called "truest" intrinsic genesis of Rastafari.

Some scholars have opined, in contrast to Ruby, that anthropologic film consists simply of descriptions of social and cultural phenomena supplemented by their theoretical interpretation and analysis (Crawford and Turton 1992). *Dreadlocks Story* inherently rejects this idea, as the visuals are the product of both the director - (scholar) and the document of the subject's words, practices and culture. The participants did not take part in the editing process. This film is strictly a synchrony between audience and participants that reveals my relations to others or at least publicly presents information about the components of producer and process.

The documentary facilitates the encounter that opens space for the viewers to position themselves in the world under observation. *Dreadlocks Story* uses distinct strategies to avoid being a mere exercise in verification, revealing that there is a genuine lack of knowledge that it is seeking to resolve. As the filmmaking engages a re/presentation, *Dreadlocks Story* broadcasts a reflection of African and Indian descendants, encountered in a space, an ethnocultural space, that the experience of their ancestors intertwined histories allowed the creation of a new cultural system.

I aimed to give life to new learning opportunities that encourage

positioning oneself in relation to this world. Not only the words and images from the video were transmitted, but my own hopes on the importance of never forgetting, always honouring and continuously remembering those who have suffered and died at the hands of one of the most nightmarish treatments of human beings by other human beings in World History. In another way, *Dreadlocks Story* unfolds the conversation with different cultures to shake up the manifestly forgone conclusions of history and kindle another look at women's access to sensitive male-oriented environments. I coveted to make an impression on stigmatization and awake a worldly curiosity about a history that involved four continents.

It is important to remind that, in intending act with reflexivity in my position as director, producer, and anthropologist of *Dreadlocks Story*, anthropology is viewed in this endeavour as an ideological system, and film as a medium for communication, as opposed to the idea that film is mere art.

For not simply collecting exotic "facts of others," as anthropology is commonly defined, I needed to engage, to be reflective of my own cultural and life practices when discussing another culture through the way of film. "How much of my self-do I put in and leave out?" is the way Holman Jones (2005: 764) wondered the question. Auto-anthropology involves the use of cultural richness for self-reflection and understanding the nature of encounters.

With my few means, including my social responsibility and a low budget to produce the film, I could not change the world, and yet with this movie, I attempted to change the world of some people simply in defending, recognizing and respecting their dignity without enjoining from commercial objectives.

Giving a voice to the voiceless, to those who are stigmatized, was eventually one of the goals of which this film was made; to grasp "their" points of view and their relations to life; to realize their visions of their world; to contribute to their possibility to speak on discrimination and segregation in life as they have experienced them.

Dreadlocks Story can be an illustrative example of the way in which social identities and respective understandings have a bearing on what knowledge is produced and how it is produced. Thus, the encounter that the documentary facilitates grants space for the viewers to position themselves in the world.

Conclusion

Dreadlocks Story is a story behind History that has barely been told and without a doubt never been seen in a visual manner. It is a story equally based on tragedy and hope, on the inflicted mistreatment of human beings towards other human beings and on the birth of a social and cultural movement built on the idea to restore people's proud and confidence led by a single man, Leonard Howell.

In *Transcultural Cinema* (1998), David MacDougall, an anthropologist and filmmaker, speaks about the slippage between filmed and written anthropology, each of them having its own blind spots, providing information and insight that the other cannot. *Dreadlocks Story* does not lay down a conclusion but recalls what it is based on History erased from the collective memory. What can it teach? This documentary is indicative of a concentration on the value of film as reasoning beyond knowledge and an act of thinking.

Dreadlocks Story aspires to set the story of a never before seen history surprisingly rooted in Asia, which weaves into a group's re-appropriation of an African heritage. It gives a voice to those who rarely had said what they experienced, and captures what is not easily accessible, and yet very important to those who embrace the Sadhu and Rasta ways of life. It highlights a unique cultural movement through the anthropological lens, focusing on hardly ever-expressed topics, such as kidnapped Indians in the Caribbean and Jamaicans oppressed by fellow Jamaicans.

Rastafari provides a means of individual mobility and is perhaps the only viable alternative lifestyles available to those living within

the narrow confines of what was a rigidly stratified society. Decades later, it may be wondered how Jamaican society could have been independent of Rastafari.

The film became a strategy for documenting the articulation of Rastafari and Hinduism. The multi-country framework is productive in conveying the experience of Rastafari's adhesion resulting from slavery to Jamaica that has internationally expanded and in visualizing the impacts of social and cultural processes of Indians related to the colonial British Empire. The alliance of film and anthropology has proved to be fruitful in picturing the need to go beyond the intimacy of individual scenarios for the purpose of understanding their place in the global system.

The intention was to make a film that straddles the world of documentary cinema and the traps of commercial filmmaking. I have focused on the fact that *Dreadlocks Story* casts a twin process: (1) it discovers Indian history in Jamaica, which is barely known for lack of research, interest and possible sources, and (2) underscores the complex attitude to culture in Jamaica but at large, like a real anthropological matter. I have focused on the sense and selection making of the interviewed people and the practices of letting them express the way they wanted.

Dreadlocks Story blurs the line not simply between participants and filmmaker but between participants, filmmaker, and the audience. I followed Karl Heider, who stated: "It is probably best not to try to define ethnographic films. In the broadest sense, most films are ethnographic – that is, if we take "ethnographic" to mean "about people" (1976: 1).

Dreadlocks Story has become an excellent pedagogical tool for drawing parallels with the Indian indentureship system in the Caribbean, the fight of Rastafari and the cultural and social process emerging from atrocious European imperialism. It articulates the trajectory of cultural internal and external encounters that prompt an ongoing articulation of Rasta identity. It is, in the end, a successful and intriguing addition to the literature and visual

discussions of this archetypal community.

Accordingly, the effectiveness of this essay illustrates the breadth and scope of *Dreadlocks Story*. The visual work provides a means to engage in anthropology because it is ethnographically descriptive, methodologically committed to observation and interviews, theoretically insightful, pedagogically useful and has potential application largely about unfairness.

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