

# VYBZ KARTEL'S

## THE VOICE OF THE JAMAICAN GHETTO

**"Incarcerated but not Silenced".**

"I pray this book helps to change Jamaica forever."

Written By Adidja Palmer aka Vybz Kartel  
and Michael Dawson

**THE  
VOICE  
OF THE  
JAMAICAN  
GHETTO**

Adidja "Vybz Kartel" Palmer

&

Michael Dawson

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Adidja Palmer and Michael Dawson

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**for**

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**THERESA WILSON PALMER**

**AND**

**ESLYN LAMOURIA WILLIAMS**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It goes without saying that this venture would be nothing without certain persons. On behalf Addi, I would like to salute all the souljahs who helped to make this dream a reality. However, we must first acknowledge the two ladies that are the inspiration for this book and without whom there would be no Adidja Palmer or Michael Dawson.

Firstly, Theresa Wilson Palmer; I think the best way to capture the relationship between you and Addi is to depict that first night of his incarceration. You wanted to go in and see him at all costs not because Vybz Kartel was in jail but because your son was. However, despite not knowing how many days of incarceration were ahead, his only concern was that you did not see him behind bars as he was more concerned about your health than his freedom – that moment will touch me forever. He has such great love and profound respect for you. Even during that night, there was that spiritual communication between mother and son. A spiritual connection Addi has shared with me that he holds so dearly in his heart. The only time I have seen him emotional is when he refers to you, the kids and Shorty or other close family. I almost feel wrong writing about this because I don't think I can do him justice for you in my words except to say that I am sure that he is being strong and he is getting by because your love made him strong. Secondly, Eslyn Lamouria Williams (Patsy), my mother, mommy, I cannot do you justice in words either. You have been my mother, father, friend and number one fan all my life. I bet after the Honour Rolls and It's A Smart World appearances I did on jBC along with the Catholic school education you provided me; you probably never figured that your son would end up writing a book "bunning out Babylon" with Jamaica's most notorious Dancehall Artist but Mommy you know *I N I a Rastafari* and Jah Works must be done. I thank you for giving me the foundation and the means to do this most important work of my life thus far. Prior to this, the high point of my career was cutting Miss Lou's last birthday cake with her and doing Oliver's play but I can say I have never been prouder than I am now to stand up beside the people of the *Ghetto* and speak up for the *them*. It is through my observation of your life and the lessons you and Grandma taught me about giving your heart and soul to those in need especially when they don't ask or give you anything in return. Mommy, my number one goal in life is to make you proud of me and I hope this book makes you proud, I love you Mommy, you are my hero.

To my wife Camille, it is very comforting to know that I have your love and support in all my endeavors even when you know they are risky. You have not only encouraged me but you have taken time out of your motherly duties and own workload to help me with mine. Joshie and Michael Junior are sorry about all the soccer matches and play time Daddy missed; I look forward to making it up to you. Kayla, you are my Princess and you exemplify what Addi explained to me what Gaza is – having your own identity, believing in what you believe in and work hard to achieve.

To all the people who helped to work on this book, we thank you for your efforts and your bravery in speaking up for the *Ghetto* against Babylon. A very special thanks to Keecha Gooch or Goochie and Addi calls you for your efforts from day one until now. We have wanted to put a label on your hard work – researcher, editor, co-ordinator, administrator, creative director – but I guess you have done it all. This project was our toughest but we did it. Our Senior Editor, D. Luke, words can't express the gratitude we have for your consult, tireless work and dedication. Mr. Paul Burke, I often wonder what it would be like to do a business venture without your advice and guidance. Lonique 'Marcy' Chiswick, Anna "Sarayna" Edwards, RNM; those were some crazy all nighters we pulled at UWI dealing with the KFC as we edited in between Addi's jokes. Mrs. Sam, thanks for opening up your business to be our office and making us feel at home. Oliver Samuels, Sizzla and all my other business partners, thanks for your support. Mark, Norman, Dahron, Nikki, Vijay, Cary, both Sharons and all the part time editors – big up. Camille M, Jan, Aisha and the rest of the Whirlwind crew, the work has only begun. We have to take the message on behalf of Jamaica's poor people to the world. It is an honourable task to be a voice for the voiceless so let us do this job with the utmost zeal and vigour.

The news keeps reporting that Vybz Kartel is in jail but I disagree with that. I can assure you that if you check the Correctional Department's roster, no person with the first name Vybz and last name Kartel is listed as an inmate. There is indeed a man named Adidja Palmer in jail. His stage name, alias, moniker or whatever you want to call it, happens to be Vybz Kartel but for those of us who know Addi it would seem that, through this classification or association, the public, the police and the media have tried and convicted the controversial deejay Vybz Kartel that they love to hate and have Adidja Palmer serving Kartel's sentence without the benefit of a trial.

The title of this Section is "*Preface*" and I am supposed to give you a little preview of what is to come in the book. There are literary protocols to follow; a format to adhere to; appropriate words to use; an acceptable length to work within, all these rules to follow, but how do I do that? What is the "protocol" for what I am doing now? How are you supposed to write a Preface when your co-author is in jail, charged with double murder without being granted the human right to get bail? What are the rules concerning that? Are you supposed to pretend that it is not happening or do you acknowledge it and let the reader know how you truly feel? I mean, the irony is glaring. Addi is one of the most recognizable persons in Jamaica and his visa woes are well known – yet he is not able to secure bail when, with what little knowledge I have of the justice system, the key determinant of bail eligibility is the likelihood of the accused not turning up for trial. Now really, where is Vybz Kartel going to hide in Jamaica or how many would not recognize him at the ports?

Well, I admit, I do not have the strong will and determination like Adidja Palmer. When I last visited him, he told me "*nuh worry MD, man anuh Girl Guide, Man a Soldier*", with the confident snicker I am used to. Understand, long before we wrote this book, Addi explained to me the fear he had of the police, in fact, the first email he ever sent to me explained that he felt they were out to "get him". This is one of the things we have in common due to my childhood experiences with the police. It reminded me of the cry of police brutality by Peter Tosh, the unsolved murders of Biggie/Tupac and the seemingly endless stories of the demise of those who stood up to *Babylon*. He simply had a premonition that he was next. This book has been done for nearly a year and we kept waiting for the right time. After his arrest, I naturally felt this book would never be printed because it is the biggest



attack against *Babylon* since Peter Tosh's last album and we both know *Babylon* does not take attacks on them lightly – go ask Aristide, Castro or Mugabe. If Addi had a fear of *Babylon* before being incarcerated, imagine when certain things in this book are revealed – what is going to happen to him then? I sent Addi a message that we can wait until he is out to publish the book – how are you going to write things critical of the police and expect them to be impartial, they are only human? The response I got from him was that he wants to move full speed ahead and let the chips fall where they may. Yes, he may be incarcerated but his cry on behalf of *Ghetto* people will not be silenced. Please do not think for a second that Addi wants to be viewed as a martyr or as one sacrificing his life for the *Ghetto*. No, to be clear, he is just a *Ghetto yute* angry at society for what it has done to poor people; he recognizes that he has a voice and he is using it.

Of course, I have concerns for my own safety, for that of my family and the persons who worked on this book with me. As an African of Jamaican birth, I act in the tradition of my people who draw on the strength of their ancestors. I remember Marcus Garvey saying that we as black men must stand up for that which is right and not be afraid of the consequences. Well, I am no Adidja Palmer and I am certainly not even worthy to carry the soles of Marcus Garvey's shoes but I am going to ensure that this book is published on behalf of every *voiceless* person in the *Ghetto*. Every person who has been denied a job because of their inner-city address, every young girl forced to sleep with her boss just to keep her job, every woman who is treated like a "gyal" in the corporate offices of Jamaica just because she is poor; every child who bears scars from years of hearing how ugly they are because of how black their skin is or how big their nose is; every youth in lock up just because he can't find the right lawyer or bail money; every person who has to use the bathroom in a scandal bag and is called a squatter and every man treated like a "bwoy" just because he mows the lawn or washes the car of the rich. I take the risk of publishing this book because of them with the hope that Jamaica and the powers that be will be forced to listen to the *Ghetto* people after this.

Unlike Society, I do not blame you for your circumstance. I do not look down on you because you have no running water, or you can't find school uniforms for your children or you have to live in the darkness because there is no money to pay the electricity bill. There is no shame on you. The shame and the disgrace, the dregs of society, in my opinion, is the majority of the individuals that sit in Parliament and allow this to happen. The blemish on Jamaica is those who allow big Corporations to come into Jamaica, charge poor people fees they cannot afford and whisk off billions to their home

countries while poor Jamaicans suffer in deplorable living conditions unable to afford the basic necessities of life. The nasty people of Jamaica are not the ones who do not have water to bathe or flush the toilet but are the ones who make our water system inaccessible to the poor. So it is for all of you that I write this book; the voiceless who have been victimized.

As I deal with my own fear of repercussions, I can only apologize to my family and loved ones for the ridicule that may come to them. From slavery days, we were taught to be good *niggas*; not to get in trouble, not to mess with *Massa* or fight the *House Niggas* (in today's society the ones in Parliament) but I am about to break that rule. For nearly 40 years it has been pent up in me and when I saw Addi's bravery when I heard his music, I felt it was time.

To my children, Kayla, Michael Jr. and Joshua, I want to remind you of the letter that Che Guevara wrote to his children and I will borrow from his words and say the same to you as an attempt to explain why Daddy took this risk:

*"Your father is a man who acts as he thinks best and who has been absolutely faithful to his convictions.....Above all be sensitive, in the deepest areas of yourself, to any injustice committed against whoever it may be in the world"*

A BIG KISS from *Daddy*. May Rastafari guide and keep you always. I will always be at peace that you are blessed with the best mother and grandmother that one could ever have.

Many people have wondered how this improbable collaboration came about. How could someone who is a known Garveyite collude with the "Bleacher" to write a book? How can someone who was nominated for a US Congressional Medal of Distinction be affiliated with someone who cannot get a US Visa? How did my Champion background find common ground with the Gaza? I will explain. I first met Addi, in 2007 through Ryan "Gary" Braithwaite a.k.a Gary Exodus who asked that I sponsor (through our company People's Telecom) a peace initiative that Addi had in Portmore. Reluctantly, I did because the music that I heard from Vybz Kartel at the time was not to my liking. Gary knows that I am a Rastafari and I stay away from certain things. However, at the event we exchanged courteous salutations and I remember commenting to my COO at the time, that I was taken aback by how

extraordinarily well mannered Vybz Kartel was – not at all what I had experienced with other deejays.

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We did business again in 2009 and had our first meeting on a Sunday night at Gary's house. It lasted for nearly two hours, one hour and fifty-nine minutes of which were spent talking about his kids, his ambition for their education and society's ills. In fact, he started the conversation (that was to be about a concert) by asking what it would take for his children to get into Campion. He then went on to explain how he intended to set up their college fund and create financial security for them and the rest of his family.

I wasn't as taken aback this time because by then I had heard *Dollar Sign*, *Mama*, *A Nuh My Music*, *Dem Nuh Like We* etc. I realized what Addi was reluctant to admit; that deep down he realized he had the gift of being a lyricist and the ability to put it on a Dancehall rhythm like no one else had. He feared however (my observation,) that being known as a conscious artist would give him a label that he did not want. Later on, things became a lot different during his interaction with Carolyn Cooper; I realized that what he had to say was more important than any song and out of that realization and our many discussions *The Voice of the Jamaican Ghetto* (or *Gaza* if you prefer) was born.

If I had one word to describe Addi, I would say comedic because I have never known another person who would start your interaction each day with a joke. He is, however, more than that. As we worked on the book together, I saw that he had a mastery of "*Ghetto Philosophy*." Once he was explaining to our researcher Keecha and me, how he handles all the scrutiny and criticism. He told us about his grandmother explaining that if a tree had no mangoes people would walk by it and complain that "*nutten nah gwan fi da tree deh*" but as soon as the tree started to bear fruit, people would stone it, climb it, get a stick and pull on it just to get what it had. As soon as they were done using the tree for food, his grandmother explained further, they would turn around and curse the tree again but would always stop cursing it while the tree was feeding them. So he sees his life as that mango tree. No one cared when he was an upcoming deejay but once he made it, the sticks and stones and yes bottles, had come after him. Of course, those benefitting from his achievements were his best 'friends' for a while but if they saw a new tree or he refused to stop giving hand outs; the 'friends' became enemies.

The thing Addi and I have most in common is our love for our mothers and children. I never thought

would meet another individual who loved his children as much as I do so it was easy for us to go along and talk for hours about them. I remember him calling me about 2 a.m. one morning saying that he had walked into his kids room and saw a channel that showed cartoons most of the day showing an adult themed cartoon during late night and how much he feared them waking up and seeing it. He then reminded me to not let my children watch that channel. In the summer, he complained that his schedule was not giving him enough time to spend with the kids. He wanted us to take both of our children to Tracks 'n' Records but changed his mind about this and vacationing at RIU because the crowd would not allow him to get time with his family. I remember him taking the time to encourage Michael Jr to do well in school on his birthday and making a special birthday video for Kayla but most of all I remember him being the first person to call me when my mother had surgery. In fact, he encouraged me to take a break from us writing so that I could be with her.

So that's why this book is here. The desire for a talented deejay to speak to his "*Ghetto* people" in a way no one has ever spoken to them and an equal desire for one who grew up humble but has had the privilege of the best in life to speak on behalf of those from where he came. Okay, so the obvious question – how does a Garveyite deal with the bleaching. Addi is one of the most "black conscious" persons I know and through co-writing this book I learnt a lot about race relations and the history of racism in Jamaica from Addi. He will forever be upset with me for what I am about to disclose but Addi is one of those people who knows natural psychology, that is, he knows how to use his art like Vybz Kartel to get into the minds of people. Addi knew that Vybz Kartel's bleaching would bring to the forefront the biggest discussions on race relations that we ever had in Jamaica. In fact, after over a hundred years of people bleaching, there is now a television ad on TV that is anti-bleaching. There have been more columns, more round table talk, more discussion on Black Pride since Addi bleached. To Addi, I would like to say: Mission Accomplished, you sang the song "Where is the Love for the Black Child?" so many times and no one listened; now you have the whole world talking about Black pride – congratulations.

Addi, though you have waited patiently, you won't be at the launch, you won't be there to see the little kids reading our book and learning to speak up for themselves. You never got a chance to get the Gaz Education and Literacy program (GEL) or the Theresa Palmer computer center that we were planning off the ground but finally Babylon is going to hear you loud and clear. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to join you as we speak on behalf of our people. Hopefully, after this, ghetto people will

feel that there is always someone willing to speak up for them regardless of their circumstances. See you soon my friend, see you soon. I always listen to Bob Marley's "*Duppy Conqueror*" and visit you soon. There are better days coming for you.

We will soon forward to the little spot on Hope Road, eat a food and hol' a reason. May Jah Jah bless and keep you until we link again.

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## **“THANK YOU JAH”**

*Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain, Unless the Lord watches over the city,  
the watchmen stand guard in vain*

New International Version (©198

I start this book in the same way that I start each day of my life, with a *Thank you Jah* for giving me, Adidja Palmer, the inspiration to be Vybz Kartel. May the words on the pages of this book be well received. May it touch the hearts of the oppressors of my people so that they may treat the poor with compassion. May it be a tool that *Society* will utilize to understand ghetto *livity* so that they may change their impression of us and start treating ghetto people with respect whether they are helpers, gardeners, barmaids, drivers or any marginalized person in Jamaica. May it reach the desks of the prison officials so that they may implement more humane and positive procedures in our jails, so that our people can be welcomed back into Society after they have done their time. May it be a reference point for Jamaican males that have never taken the time to understand what our mothers, babies, mothers, sisters and women in general, go through. Most of all, may it be a source of motivation for my people, especially the young ones, as they find their way through life in this lovely place, *Xamaina* – its original name before the genocidal Christopher Columbus came to plunder and destroy an entire Amerindian people under the guise of Christianity. It is with this hope that I have taken the time to write this book in between studio time and my role as a father. I ask that it is blessed. The hate from the haters is expected, but guess what, Kartel is sending you a blessing too because *the Gaza nuh be our mind*. Come on, I know you are going to read this, that’s okay with me. The only way we can have a better Jamaica is if we spend the time learning from each other.

“Thank you Jah” starts with the first two verses of Psalms 127: “Except the Lord builds the house, i

builders labour in vain. Except the Lord watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain.

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This Psalm was chosen because it is one of only two Psalms written by the great and wise King Solomon; the other one being Psalm 72 which deals with reverence and prophecy. We always hear that a chapter a day keeps the devil away and many people assume that this saying is referring to a chapter from the book of Psalms. That may be true but I don't deal with the devil business so I choose to read a chapter from Proverbs daily. This brings up something I really cannot understand. If it is accepted by everyone that Solomon is the wisest man that ever lived, why does Babylon have us continuously singing Psalms while we could spend some of that time reading the book of wisdom sanctioned by Solomon – Proverbs? Incidentally, there are 31 Proverbs which will be an ideal daily word for each day of the month. Take it from Kartel, a Proverb a day keeps stupidity and idleness away. A Proverb a day makes one wise to the ways of the world.

Now, not everyone can be like Solomon, though the prospect of 700 wives sounds quite enticing to many Jamaican men due to our polygamous roots, but by studying Proverbs you will at least have a different outlook on life and its challenges. I wrote "*Thank You Jah*" because, having been raised *pon the Gaza*. I understand the despair Jamaicans feel when they wake up each morning in a world of poverty, crime and violence. With all this, it is easy to get discouraged but I want my people to know that there are reasons to be thankful. Also, there are strategies for making life better and things will get better if we apply ourselves and plan a way forward.

Okay, I know what you are thinking. We hear it on the news. Between 2004 and 2010, Jamaica's murder rate has been, on average, 1500. In 2005, 2008 and 2009 there were over 1600 murders reported. According to USAID, 1.6% of the population is living with HIV, and 1 in every 4 Jamaicans is living below the poverty line. There were recent years when on average, three days could not go by in Jamaica without at least one person being killed by the Jamaican police. These are statistics that are commonly published by '*Society*' but poor people know the straight facts. If you live in the corporate area, you can multiply some of those ratios by 3 and if you live deep in the inner city, you have to multiply them by 5. If you are ever unfortunate enough to live in what *Babylon* labels as the '*Garrison*', then you multiply them by 10. We know that an element of *Babylon's* mind control is the distortion of data, facts and statistics. Furthermore, we can do our own research *pon the Gaza*. After all, what *Babylon* does not tell us is a lot of their data comes from so-called "random sampling." How are we to know if they are not manipulating the data for their own benefit? Well, I hope this book

serves as the equalizer as this is straight reality from a ghetto perspective.

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Personally, I have known at least two dozen youths who have died before age 30. Who knew that 18 years old would be considered middle-aged in sweet Jamaica? I know a number of innocent youths who have spent many nights in jail for a crime that they know nothing about. I have spent more than 20 nights in jail without being charged. So you as a Jamaican resident may say, Kartel, “*you know, King, so why you want us to say thank you Jah for waking me up this morning?*” My opinion is still that we have good reasons to be thankful in spite of our bad circumstances, in spite of my first-hand knowledge of ghetto *livity* and ghetto despair. See, I know that life in the ghetto is like those turn-styled doors you would see at the front of the big New York City department stores in the 1980s, the ones that go round and round and never stop as long as there is a force to push them. It is another day of struggle, another day of survival, finding something to eat, looking for a job, a roast, a hustle, just something to put a little money in your pocket; to protect your manhood so you don’t have to *beg the bus fare to look for work across town*. But as tough as that situation may be, every day we wake up with a chance to jump out from the revolving door and enter the stability of having a little work so we can provide something for our families.

So, I know as you read this, many of you are saying, “*but I thought I heard Kartel say he is not a Christian so how come he is singing and writing about Jah?*” I am not sure at what point in the evolution of the world Christians acquired the monopoly on spirituality. As this is a very important point for me, I will further elaborate on this in the Chapter “Where is the love for the Black Child?” I want to highlight here though that there is a massive disconnect between the Euro-Christian church in Jamaica and many youths in the ghetto. Note, I emphasize Euro-Christian which is just one form of Christianity, actually the form of Christianity that was used to enslave us. Keep in mind that Christopher Columbus (*Comebruckus*) was given money by Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to not only explore the New World but to Christianize it. It was only after the Amerindians such as the Arawaks, Caribs and Ciboneys could no longer stomach the Christian slave system that black Africans were sought. Bishop Bartolome de Las Casas had written a treatise to explain why blacks were more suited for slavery and his point was further explained by Pope Julius II of Rome who took the view that Africans did not have souls so something such as slavery was not frowned upon by God because it at least brought them from their heathen lifestyle. Sounds familiar? It does, because in Jamaican Society today if you are not a baptized church-going Christian, you are also classified as a heathen similar to how Pope



Julius II condemned black people centuries ago. Sometimes, I wish that the *Gaza* was around in those days when these men came off their ships, dressed in their stockings, short pants and funny hats to tell the Portmore people that they are heathens so they should come and work for free and these men's stockings will show them salvation. I am confident you could stay from the toll road and hear the sailors begging for mercy when the *Gaza done wid them*.

So my point is, Society expects people who do not identify with this symbol of their enslavement to not have any spirituality. Not so. Vybz Kartel is not a Euro-Christian nor am I Roman Catholic. I still don't understand how a man in Jamaica who *can't even get a visa to reach Italy* considers himself a Roman. Not being a Euro-Christian does not preclude one from giving thanks to Jah, it just may not be your Jah. For Kartel, it does not matter who your Jah is. Your Jah could be Life, Jesus, Buddha, Allah, Krishna, Yoga or Jehovah as long as it is a force of good; a force of *livity*.

Let's leave it there for now as I do not want to make this song a catalyst for a religious argument because the great Malcolm X made the point in opening his 1964 Detroit Speech that we should keep debating about our religions to ourselves because it is an internal thing and that is where it belongs inside us. Otherwise we would waste constructive time arguing about something that is a personal choice by definition and not subject to popular demand or public persecution like what Emperor Constantine dealt out to non-Christians. We now call September 11, 2001 "9-eleven" but the original 9-11 was in 364 AD when the Imperial Edict ordered punishment by death to all non-Christians. We are taught that Hitler was the person that started the mass persecution of Jews but this practice goes back to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century when Jews were persecuted in the Iberian Peninsula by a series of Spanish Inquisitions endorsed by the Pope. In fact, the greatest threat of World War III is no longer the opposing political ideologies of Democracy versus Communism; that tension died after the tearing down of the Berlin Wall cooled the Cold War. Instead, it is the constant religious ideological war between the Judeo-Christian alliance and the Muslims that is most likely to cause World War III. How ironic, religion is supposed to save the world; however, in actuality it is the thing that is most likely to end the world as we know it.

Furthermore, our own legend, Denroy Morgan, one of the most spiritual men you could ever meet and the inspiration behind Rasta warriors Morgan Heritage, did say that if he had a choice between religion and politics, he would choose politics because politics usually divides the people in only two

groups in most countries, however, religion creates multiple levels of division amongst people getting in the way of the love humanity should have for each other. Yes, we proudly say Thank You Jah *po the Gaza* because we are no *heathens, backsliders or worlians*. No, we are spiritual people who identify with a religion that reminds us of who we are and our *livity*.

*“Roll out the herb before me start yawning”*

Some say that in the song, I am thanking Jah for the *herb*, . Note well, I never mentioned marijuana explicitly. I am not an advocate for marijuana addiction or for its use by children. In fact, I don't think that marijuana, like alcohol, cigarettes and other similar substances, is for everyone. However, outside of the use of substances prescribed or not, I do believe that some sort of meditation – calm, peaceful moments with self, a period of unity between one's body and mind – must be there to reflect on the day's objectives.

Jamaica is a “*HAT*” country, as our creole speakers would say, but not just *hot from the heat* that we get everyday but a ‘*HAT*’ country in the sense that the people are walking around on *the edge* where the strong forces of arrogance and ignorance clash frequently, exploding into many arguments and heated exchanges. I think this heat is a combination of the spark of a burning internal desire for better kindled with the feeling of stagnation coming from the stink of the gullies or dumps that some of us are forced to live beside and triggered by the piercing gas pains that force themselves out of our hungry stomachs – *it's like we trying to belch the sufferation out of our chests*. Yes, my people love Jamaica *HAT* but we have to have a strategy to go into the fire without getting burnt. *Yuh eva si heavyweight boxer before a big fight in Las Vegas? Notice how him jus calm, relaxed, eyes close nobody caan bodda him* even if his opponent gets in his face and stares him down. That is why I spent so much of the song explaining the reflective mood that one must have despite the circumstances. I am trying to depict to the larger audience what a ghetto youth observes as he walks through his neighbourhood daily. This neighbourhood walk is not limited to the youths trodding through the Jamaican ghettos but it could be the walk of my people hustling in New York – Buschwick, New Lots, Bed Stuy, Gun Hill Road, Church Avenue or my Florida thugs in Carol City, Miami Garden, Lauderhill, Palm Beach or the *man dem a fight de cold up inna* Toronto and London.

The experience of ghetto youths is similar wherever we are – a lot of fatherless kids, youths hustling on the corner, hungry faces trying to figure out how breakfast *aguh dis mawnin*. Then there are the single mothers. Bwoy, Gaza statistics show that 45% of Jamaican households are headed by women and this is confirmed by UNICEF. If you multiply that figure by the true ghetto unemployment rate you will realize that one out of every three single mothers has no gainful employment in Jamaica. So when I say the system *“nah do nothing.”* I mean a little *lip service* here and political promises that cannot do anything of substance for our poor, single, ghetto mothers. That’s what I see on the *Gaza*. I walk there in the mornings but Kartel never gave up hope. I keep giving thanks and today I am humbled to have the Portmore Empire.

*“Turn round buss a kiss pon mi darling, tell her say honey mi a touch ina di street”*

Yeah man, in the song I say *“mi buss a kiss pon me dahlin.”* Real thing people, though it may show some, ghetto youths feel belittled when the woman that loves them, lives in despair due to financial hardships. She loves us, she knows the circumstances but we still wish we could give her the world. *we buss a one kiss pon her.* No questions asked, no reminders about the bills, no mention of the little wrinkles she is getting from the stress or that she hasn’t done her nails or hair in a long time. There is no money just a silent communication between you and her that the youth a *“touch in the street”* and just like the hunters in the caveman days, we must gather something, somehow, to take back to our families so they can eat. *Pon the Gaza*, we just say *“nuh say nutten”* that’s ghetto code which means *“I understand,”* which is synonymous with the Rasta code *“I ovastand”* – no need to explain. For youths, we must *pree* the process, after we give thanks and say our good-byes to the family, we *ghetto youth have to guh look sup'm.*

*“Mi vision say better days coming. A that mi a pree”*

I keep saying that I *“vision”* better days coming. Now, here is part of the reason I encourage my people to read Proverbs. There are so many lessons to be learnt from the book, especially in Proverbs 29 when Solomon *jus roll out de teaching one after de odda.* In Proverbs 29: 18, Solomon tells us that without vision the people perish. There are different types of visions. There is the out of box

experience that the great Garnet Silk described in his song “Zion in a Vision.” Then there is the vision that King Solomon is talking about. We have a word for it in the ghettoes of Jamaica – it is called “*preeing*.” *Preeing* literally means looking at something and thoroughly analyzing it before proceeding to make a decision. This is what I am referring to when I say “*I vision better days coming*.” It is not an idle thought. It is a careful plan of what I am going to do today, next week, next month and so on. I must first analyze yesterday. What tasks did I not accomplish yesterday? Those must be completed today! Which of the things on my list are not that important and can be put off for next week? Which items on my list are absolutely critical? That’s the frame of mind that black people should maintain – plan and plan thoroughly.

In Kartel’s life, family comes first; so my daily priority after I give thanks is to ensure that my kids’ well-being is attended to; then that of my other family members and the *Gaza* family. I have to see if I have interviews, appearances or travel scheduled. I then check on my various investments and business units. Being a musician, recording is unpredictable so I have to allocate time for things going beyond schedule. Sometimes, I have to be available for my kids’ school activities, supervising homework and yes there has to be the romance time *because pon the Gaza we do it in “Slow Motion*.” All this has to be accomplished before writing this book. So, when I say “*vision*,” *mi naah just talking about man wishing that one day things going to get better*. No, it is me setting out a plan, managing my priorities and constantly evaluating so I can improve each day. Please do not think that I am encouraging this planning thing just because I am busy.

Historically, it is planning that has led to success with both positive and negative outcomes. America’s international ambitions were based largely on the Munroe Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Singapore emerged from a tiny country of immigrants to a world economic power through masterful planning. Slavery, mentally and physically, was made possible through serious planning by *Babylon*. Even the Holocaust and the movement of Jews were executed after careful planning by the Nazis. So if they are planning, we have to plan too *even if a hustle we a hustle*.

Whether a studio fi guh do a one dub plate, or wash a cyar round de road, or even wipe a car glass window, go hustle phone card – sup’m! That mother of your children, those youths that have your blood in their bodies, they are all waiting on you to bring home something. But Kartel, yuh a act like Jamaica full of opportunities? You might say. I know that Jamaica is lacking opportunities big time

but we can't watch that. The great Miss Lou said "*we haffi tun we han and mek fashion*"; so we can't just say "nothing is going on, so *mi caan bodda wid de give tanks* this morning. Worse, *mek plans* go touch the street to go look something because it is pure stress and rejection since Society doesn't like to give ghetto youths work. We have to keep fighting! I am sure that's what our ancestors said when the enslavers tried to capture them. Never forget we are descendants of kings and queens who were enslaved and fought for their freedom to give us the liberty we have today. Imagine if Saatchi & Sharpe and Paul Bogle had said "*bwoy, this rough so we dun fight, is better we gwaan chill because things caan betta right now*". Where would some of us be today? On a plantation talking *bout yes massa dis and yes massa dat!* As for Kartel, you would be talking about a rebellious ex-slave name Adidja who never stop beat back the overseers. We were not always like this. The Egyptian empire was our and visitors from all over the world marvelled at our creation. Timbuktu was once a great city in modern day Mali. The two greatest universities in the world were run by Africans. Don't be fooled, I say in the song, "None a Dem neva give we nothing," so we cannot wait on Babylon. We came from slave to sergeant, from concubine to conqueror, why stop now? No excuses or cop outs.

Throughout the song, I highlighted the injustices that go through our heads in the ghetto every day. Many of our youths are imprisoned for non-violent crimes when they pose no threat to Society. I often wonder with so many bright people in Parliament, the Judiciary and other bodies, if they ever pondered this equation:

*Three children in a house MINUS the breadwinner EQUALS more suffering.*

My little son Adidja Junior can figure that out. If you must punish – punish, but what happens when the youths are left without the breadwinner at home? What does the mother at home do then? What does the system do for her? Do we have a Social Services department that provides some help? Do we have a job placement division that helps to get mothers of children with incarcerated fathers an interim job while the kids' father is in jail? So if we don't have these things, what do you think is going to happen? Our people are going to starve and suffer with more intensity. Starvation and suffering leads to desperation. Desperation leads to who knows what. That's why *I big up the youths dem that refuse to touch the chrome (gun) because when the youth dem don't eat for three days and there is no job...well what to do? "Ghetto youth we go on and on."*

In the song, I mention that the "*youths lost in the system*" as I continue to remind ghetto people the

they cannot sit and wait for the system to suddenly change and start helping us. Take the “free education” notion. Please don’t be fooled and confused by such things. Education is not limited to school fee or free tuition. Having your kids go to school without paying is your legal right; you and your fellow citizens pay your taxes so it is not free!

Secondly, education is not limited to school fees. What about auxiliary fees, book fees, lunch money, bus fare, school bag, geometry sets, pens, pencils, T-Squares, extra lessons, school uniforms, shoes, socks, tie, epaulettes – *the politicians take us for fools ‘bout free education’*. In the US, free education means books, free transportation, free or subsidized lunch, financial aid and the list goes on and on. So please, my people, there is no such thing as free education in Jamaica. It is just a con for us to worship misleading politicians.

This free education thing is just the tip of the iceberg of how Society deals with ghetto people. I have bad news for ghetto people in Jamaica who believe in social mobility and acceptance into the middle or upper class. It may happen in other places but not here. Some people that aspire to be considered upper class believe that if they get the right job, make the right money, drive the right car, move into the right neighbourhood; then the ‘Joneses’ will accept them and they will become one with them. No, so, uptown Jamaica, *don’t work suh*. Once a ghetto youth, always a ghetto youth. In fact, they have names for us: *skettel, ray ray, gengling, jing bang, bongo* – the list of derogatory names is endless.

The worse news is not only that you will never be accepted but would you believe they could not care less if you lived or died? Do you know how many times uptown people say that Jamaica’s problems will be solved if you just drop one bomb in Tivoli and one in Matches Lane? I am not generalizing here, certainly it is not everyone but a lot of the policy makers think that way so they set policies just to tolerate us.

Society says “just give them enough to breathe” because after all their system cannot run without ghetto people labour. In this system, who will sweep the yard, clean the toilets and wash the clothes for not for ghetto people? Who will work for \$4000 per week and take sexual harassment from the *boss man* if not the *helper from the country* who has no choice but to try and hold on to the job that keeps food on her family’s table? Black women have been suffering from this kind of treatment since

slavery and to this day the laws are too weak to protect them or Society just turns a blind eye because

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most of these women not just black – they are from the GHETTO! Who will lift the bags in the supermarket and serve the drinks in the nightclubs? Who will wash the car or paint the house for Christmas? *A suh the system set*. It is designed to hold ghetto people in a position of subservience to the rich and sometimes it is only through faith that ghetto people survive day to day so we say Thank You Jah.

Ghetto people, don't you dare think for one moment that Vybz Kartel doesn't understand the system. In fact, I know it so well that I realized I had to trick the system for my survival. I made them think I was harmless, just having fun, just your ordinary everyday *Deejay on a hype* but what they did not know is my heart bleeds everyday for my people, JLP/PNP, Gully/Gaza, Christian/Rastafarian. I think we are victims of *Babylon's* system – I believe that should be the motto of Jamaica's ghetto. I do feel now that *Babylon* knows I am not a cartoon, they may find a way to derail my mission. Despite all that, even when I see it storming, I keep envisioning a better day for all of us. So let us give thanks, meditate, plan out our day and together we can take on *Babylon* for a better tomorrow. Never allow Society's judgment to get you down. We need to kill that notion that us in the ghetto are simply sitting here waiting for a handout. We will have to raise our consciousness to a level of "nationhood" understanding that we each have a role to play in the development of our island. There has to be some amount of letting go of past grievances and move toward working together with common goals. Those that are in the universities must learn what they can and come to the ghetto to share that knowledge. Let your Jah be your guide – each day when you wake up anywhere in Jamaica or in the world say *Thank You Jah, me wake up this morning*.

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## “MAMA”

Ok Kartel, *you rich now*; so you are going to dedicate a chapter of your book to showing off how you take care of your mother and make her live good. She lives in a nice house, kitchen is well stocked and *bank book fat*, good for you but *wi done know dat*. *How dat help the ghetto youth* except that we feel bad that we can't do the same for our mother? Now, I won't lie. I will admit that the sense of pride and fulfillment that I feel in taking care of my mother is hard for even me to adequately articulate. Yes, DJ of the year, this award, that award for lyrics; but if I wrote 9 albums dedicated to her I could not sufficiently express my gratitude, love, respect and admiration for Theresa Wilson Palmer or mommy as I call her. This book is dedicated to her and I owe all my success to her. *Mommy me love YOU! Mi swear from mi heart* that Theresa Wilson Palmer is my queen.

Having said all that though, my song and the feelings that I have expressed in the song “Mama” are not just about my gratitude for having the ability to provide material riches for my mother but also my desire to express a sense of eternal indebtedness for giving me life and nurturing me. I wanted to convey to ghetto youths that taking care of mommy is a big part of our duty but no matter how much money we make, we can never truly repay her for bringing us into this world. Since we cannot repay her we must therefore honour her every minute of every day that we are on this earth. If you listen to the third verse keenly, you will hear me confess that I know I cannot repay her but I am going to do my best “even if it is for a fraction”. Simply put, if I can do for my mother, a fraction of what she has done for me, my life would be complete. Certainly, one way I will show my mother gratitude is by being the best father that I can be to my children and I think we must all share that sense of duty. Even being good to our kids, we are honouring our mothers.

Before going forward I want to pause and acknowledge something very important. I know many of you reading this don't have your mothers in the flesh with you but I know you feel her spirit. In every success, every failure, every tragedy, every bit of joy, you know she is there. I feel for those who have



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