Bob Marley Essay, Research Paper

email: la\_pomme@hotmail.comBob MarleyBob Marley is the greatest reggae musician of all time. More than any other musician, Bob Marley was responsible for bringing reggae music out of the slums of Jamaica to international audiences. During his nineteen year career, independently and with the Wailers, Marley blended the rebel rhythms of reggae with his message of anti-racism, equality and freedom from oppression. Today his music continues to influence musicians as diverse as Paul Simon. In 1944, a fifty year old British military man named Captain Norval Marley married an eighteen year old black Jamaican girl named Cadella Booker. They had a son, Robert Nesta Marley, later known as Bob. He was born February 6, 1945 in Nine Miles, Jamaica. Captain Marley seldom saw his son, although he provided some financial support for the family. When Bob was five years old, he was kidnapped by his father and taken to Kingston, Jamaica s capital. He was reunited with his mother about a year later. Bob and his mother lived in one of the most dangerous slums of Kingston. These living conditions later inspired Marley to write a song called Concrete Jungle , which likened the living conditions and poverty in the slum to the shackles of slavery. Bob s father, Norval Marley, died when Bob was ten years of age. Bob only saw his father for the year that he was kidnapped, and this is what he said many years later in 1978. .my father, was a guy coming from England, yunno, the kind of guy like during the slave period: the white who catch a black woman and make her a baby. An English man . I think. Because I only saw him once, yunno. My mother? My mother is an African While Bob lived in the shanty part of Kingston, there was another family with a boy Bob s age. His name was Bunny. Bunny became a brother for Bob. They sang together everyday after school. They made their own instruments. With their adolescence voice, Bob and Bunny began in 1960 to build what one day became the Wailer s music.In Kingston, musicians were developing a new sound, a new mixture of mento (a kind of calypso) and rhythm and blues. The result of this mixture was called Jamaican Ska. Bob and Bunny were fascinated with America s rhythm and blues singers such as Fats Domino, and Louis Jordan. The Drifters , and particularly the Impressions had the most impact on them.Bob, like may other Jamaican teenagers, found music a relief from the realities of ghetto life. All youths were looking for a way out of the endless cycle of poverty. Crime was a solution for some, know as rudies , but it almost certainly ended in an early death on the violent Kingston streets. When Bob attended school, he dreamed of music. However, schoolwork prepared him for big dreams, which would only result in empty solutions. The life he was destined for in Trench Town had nothing to do with math and science. By the time he was fifteen, he had quit school, and became a welder s apprentice. At least this way he could bring some money into the household. Ska spread like a fever through the restless teenage masses, and Bob was easily distracted from his welding work as he concentrated on mastering the new ska harmonies. While welding one day, a piece of burning hot metal flew into his eye and ended his welding career. He told his mother that he was actually relieved, because it meant he could spend more time on his recording career. Noone took him too seriously, because at that time everyone wanted to be a recording star. The people Bob grew up with in the Kingston slums were drawn towards a particular Rastafarian named Joe Higgs. Bob realized that he couldn t make any progress with his music without the help of someone else. He needed someone who could teach him techniques, like how to project his voice and to hold harmony. Joe Higgs held free music clinics at his home in the ghetto, only a street away from Bob s home. So Bob and Bunny attended his classes just about every single day. At 16, Marley was desperate for his first album. Little did he know that his recording career would lead him on a spiritual journey and make him the Third World s first international superstar. In 1962, Bob Marley released his first album Judge Not with Bunny and another friend Peter McIntosh. That year, after Bob released that album, he formed the Wailing Wailers. They consisted of Bunny Livingstone, Peter McIntosh, Joey Brathwaite and Bob Marley himself. The group was named the Wailers because in those days we were always crying The Jamaican ska music had changed by slowing down and becoming a little more sexual. Bob and the Wailers called the results rude boy music. Some of the first songs of this type were Stir it Up , and Back out ( back out .and shut your mouth .making thing go slow ) Also, the rude boy themes of earlier songs changed to those of social and spiritual issues as the group became more focused on Rastafarianism. On February 10, 1966, Bob Marley married a woman named Rita Anderson. The next day, Bob was on a plane to visit his mother in Deleware. Prior to that, his mother had written him several times asking him to come visit her in the United States. She wanted him to settle there, but he was impatient to get back to the Wailers in Jamaica. He worked in America just enough to be able to finance his music, and then he returned to Jamaica seven months later. In Jamaica, the Rastafarian way of life was taking over many individuals. Bunny had been a Rasta since 1963, and now Bob and Peter allowed their hair and beards to grow in the Rasta fashion. In 1967, the Wailers decided to try forming their own record label Wail n Soul , after being pushed around by producers and conflicts over their developing Rastafarian image.

In mid-1967, Bob and Rita, still newlyweds, moved back to Nine Miles. It was a time of contemplation and insight for Bob. He spent a great deal of time reading the Bible and working the land. He was returning to his roots for some answers. Their first child, Cadella, was born that year. She was named after Bob s beloved mother. The Wail n Soul record label produced a few hit singles that Bob and that Wailers recorded. The label folded at the end of the year after many problems emerged, like their lack of business knowledge. In 1968, all three Wailers served jail terms for the possession of marijuana, which is illegal in Jamaica, but is used sacredly by the Rastafarians. This jail time gave Bob time to think and reflect on his life, leading up to some of his best music ever. Bunny was in jail the whole year and, needless to say, it was not anactive recording year for the group. Bob s son David or Ziggy , was born that year. That year Bob learned a lot about Rastafarianism. He realized that it was not a religion, but a way of life. He learned that Rastas eat food which is pure, free of chemicals and balanced for good health. Most Rastas are vegetarians, although some eat fish. They also use local herbs and plants for medicinal purposes and to spice their foods.In 1970, Bob and the Wailers started another label called Tuff Gong, and released a few more albums and singles. That winter, Bob went to Sweden where he worked on a movie soundtrack, and also did a tour. Bob and the Wailers continued to record on and off until 1978 under that record label. In 1978, the U.S. was still uncharted territory for reggae musicians, and the Wailers had to slip into the already crowded world of rock and roll. They were fighting a valiant battle on the American music frontier against greats such as the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, and Stevie Wonder.In May of that year, Bob recorded a song called Buffalo Soldier . The song was recorded in Miami, and compared Jamaican Rastafarians or dreadlock Rastas , to the black American soldiers during the U.S. Civil War. Buffalo Soldier is a very revealing glimpse of Marley during this period in his life. Buffalo Soldier ..dreadlock Rasta,It was a buffalo soldier, in the heart of America. Stolen from Africa,And brought to America .. During a concert in New York in 1980, Bob nearly blacked out. The following morning, he decided to go for a run. He collapsed and was carried back to the hotel by his running partner. Within days, Marley was told he had a brain tumor, and he had suffered a stroke when he was running. He was also told that he wouldn t live another month. Everyone, and most of all Bob, was shocked. Despite his illness, Bob insisted on going to Pittsburgh for the next show. His wife, Rita, insisted that he cancel the tour. Bob prevailed and played a brilliant show that night at the Stanley Theatre. Rita contacted Bob s lawyer to ensure the tour was stopped. On the 23rd of September, it was reported that Bob Marley was suffering from exhaustion and the Tuff Gong Uprising Tour was canceled. Bob was flown from Miami to New York s Memorial SloanKetting Cancer Center, where he was fully diagnosed as having brain, lung, and stomach cancer. He was flown back to Miami where he was baptized as Berhane Selassie in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, a Christian church, at Rita s suggestion. Five days later, in a last effort to prolong his life, Bob was flown to a controversial treatment center in Germany. Dr. Joseph Issels ran the clinic, and had been successful in treating terminal cases before. Bob celebrated his thirty-sixth birthday in February of 1981, in the clinic. When he arrived to the clinic, Marley had lost all his hair, but now he seemed to be gaining strength and his hair was growing back. He was, however, still losing weight. On the eleventh day of may, nineteen eighty-one, a full six months later, Robert Nesta Marley died. His wife and mother were at his bedside. When Bob Marley died, at the young age of thirty-six, some people believe that the age of reggae music was over. But they failed to notice that he had become a legend, and a legend s influence never dies. Many musicians have turned to Marley s music time and time again for inspiration. Paul Simon, Eric Clapton, the Police, and Stevie Wonder are just a few of the American Musicians who were strongly influenced by Bob Marley s brand of reggae. I believe that Bob Marley is definitely the greatest reggae musician of all time. I admire him for getting out of the Jamaican slums, and making something of his life. His son David, now know as Ziggy Marley has now followed in his fathers footsteps, and is now a very talented musician. The following is a quote from my favorite song by Bob Marley, Natural Mystic . There s a natural mystic blowing through the airif you listen carefully now you will hearthis could be the first trumpetmight as well be the lastmany more will have to suffermany more will have to die-don t ask me whythings are not the way they used to beI won t tell you no lieone and all have no face reality now tho I ve tried to find the answer to all the questions they ask tho I know it s impossible to go on living through the pastdon t tell no liethere s a natural mystic blowing through the aircan t keep them downif you listen carefully now you will hear