

Papa Sorrel

a Jamaican memento

Natty Mark Samuels

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Dedication

to my father

Lance Samuels

ninety years old

born in Somerton; resident in Cambridge, Montego Bay.

to

Junie James

aka Great Elder

to

Pat Green

aka Sista Purple

to

Sista Sylvie

of the Communi-tea Cafe

and to

Nico Fuller

aka Wiseman

because this land that produced you is beautiful

Introduction

Jamaica is hot! The hottest country I've ever stepped in!

I love Kingston. Whether trying to get the laptop fixed on Half Way Tree; sitting in Emancipation Park in New Kingston, eating at Doctor Spice in Papine, or getting a local sim in Liguanea. Love the quite of Gordon Town and the bustle of Red Hills Road.

Good to see some of those legendary roads we know from roots reggae, through songs or interviews, such as Hope, Constant Springs and Emmanuel. Good to see the Sugar Minott vision, Youth Promotions, is still a working studio.

And driving between Kingston and the Mo Bay region, offers a thousand more blessings. The immensity of the forest and the turquoise of the sea; the groves and the coves, the buzzards and egrets. I've never been so attracted to the natural world, as here, especially the birds and the flora; like the mango hummingbird and the glossy ibis; flame trees and bougainvillea.

Good to see the Rasta elders here and there, interacting and respected.

Jamaica is beautiful.

Natty Mark Samuels, June, 2022.

Pilgrimage

to Dr Spice

Took a little pilgrimage earlier. Through Mona Heights, then Papine; by Dr Spice restaurant, where the hands of a Rastaman, have been blest with culinary expertise. Onward, up past Shanty Man, where Roots juice flows, like a fountain of endless goodness. Up, up, on Gordon Town Road. And as the river descends, Marvin and I ascend, to the square in Gordon Town, where a bronze statue of Miss Lou, dominates the area.

I was saddened when a Ras elder, replying to a question I asked him, informed me that the house of her birth and youth, has not been preserved: it is not a site of national heritage.

The grey bearded one sat on the stairs and I stood next to him, taking in the panorama, which can easily be described as beautiful, enchanting, awesome or breathtaking. The green of the Blue Mountain range, interspersed with orange of the flame trees. The elder and I sat and smiled, as I think the two buzzards may have also: smiling, floating high above us, on the currents of sweetest air.

I came to pay homage, Miss Lou;
To whisper in your ear,
I love you.

Kingston

Verse for the Vendor

Time in Ethiopia,
I wore jeans;
During Jamaica,
The need of shorts.

Bring the sun,
Bring a tree also;
The benediction of shade,
For the vendor,
In the street all day,
Selling coconut,
Pineapple,
And bottles of fruit juice.

Spangle and Shimmer

Spangle for me Kingston, along Blue Mountain range. Seems like the spirit of the forested hills, has strung Christmas lights on every single tree. Shimmer for me Kingston, at 3am, when sleep is elsewhere: celebrate the joy of my workshop with me.

Kingston

Little Struggler

To flit, appears to be its preferred mode of movement. I cannot see it, but I can hear it, scuttling under the amalgamation of fallen leaves. Scuttle you scuttle, careful you don't buckle! Like me little one, maybe its time to slow down.

Chanted

Slow down,

Little lizard:

I think you should slow down.

I know the pressure comes on sometimes: the things that need to get done. But easy, little stranger. Go and sit in the shade of the stump, as the tree above us, offers me the same. Your movement has been relentless: what have you achieved? Maybe its time to take a break, little struggler.

Chanted

Slow down,

Little lizard:

I think you should slow down.

Bush Bath

Fling them in, practitioner;
Tamarind, rosemary,
And leaves of lime.

Lay in the bath, sufferer,
The old time tonic,
From Nanny Maroon time.

Let Me Sing Of Kingston

I am only a visitor here,
But let me sing of Kingston.

Yes, I've heard of this and that; and seen the bustle and strivings at Half Way Tree and on Red Hills Road: I have also touched serenity.

Devon House,
Of inter-generational magic.
Emancipation Park,
Humanity at rest and leisure.
Maamee River,
Where beauty invites you to be seated.

If you fly into Norman Manley, then travel out to somewhere else, you'll never get a little touch of Kingston, where it is safe and sweet. It is the capital city of a nation, so we should see more than just the airport. Free our minds from hearsay, to pass an hour or two, in Emancipation Park.

I am only a visitor here,
But let me sing of Kingston.

Kingston

Papa Sorrel

Did you ever step in, from the Jamaican heat, to a glass of cold sorrel? Was the ingredient grown by your father? If so, I know you smiled as it went down and grinned when you'd drained the glass, as your throat sang a song of hibiscus.

Cambridge, Mo Bay.

Amy Ackee

The spirit of breeze passed through this afternoon, while I was sitting in a grove of fruit trees, so I stayed longer than I'd planned. In fact, I spent most of the afternoon and early evening there, in muted conversation with old friends and acquaintances; Paloma Palm, Jackfruit Johnny, Amy Ackee, Plantain Pete, Breadfruit Bill and Banana B. While the hummingbirds and butterflies went here and there, I sat in my father's back garden, in quiet communion with Creation.

Cambridge, Mo Bay.

A Verse for Two

to Lance and Josephine Samuels: 50th Anniversary.

Just had a brief encounter with love. Two butterflies, seemingly glued together, both coloured lime green and dark brown, went dashing across the green location, like two people destined for each other, holding hands, running towards the registry office.

Cambridge, Mo Bay.

Maasai

We know how they like to sing to their favourite cows, so if a Maasai man was here, he would sing of her, as would a Dinka herder, if one were here also. For the brown cow, in the garden next to my father's, has a pattern like the marble cake made by Sista Sylvie, in the Caribbean cafe, in Blackbird Leys Oxford.

Come Maasai,
Yes I.
Chant for the lonely cow,
Appareled in shades of brown.

Cambridge, Mo Bay.

Sufferer

The decaying, dropping brown fronds of a banana tree, remind me of the rags hanging off a man, standing by a pole, in intermittent conversation with himself, on Constant Springs Road.

Cambridge, Mo Bay.

Runaway Dentist

Passing Runaway Bay earlier, I saw a large conch shell on a table and thought of it as the tooth of an impatient, angry giant, waiting for diagnosis, from a reluctant and jittery dentist.

Cambridge, Mo Bay.

The Easier They Come

Even though I didn't need it – already had some - I bought a tube of incense from an ancient one, in New Kingston. I know the persecution the grey-bearded ones went through – making it easier for those of us who came after – so when I see a Ras elder, still juggling on the street, I have to stop: to salute, support and give thanks.

Gargantuan

I sit on a little stone wall, in the shade of trees; a banana, palm and breadfruit. I sit and ponder my father's jackfruit cultivation, which look like they should be recipients of prizes: never seen jackfruit so big! But how to describe them? I'm adrift, without metaphor or analogy to propel me along. All that comes to mind, is of a gargantuan breast, with a thousand green nipples.

Omnipresence

I thank God,
For the omnipresence of orange.

In the flame tree,
On the ackee,
During sunset.
Colouring bougainvillea,
And the butterfly,
Waltzing through my father's green ballroom.

I give thanks,
For the beautiful fusion,
Of vermilion and yellow.

Cambridge, Mo Bay.

Dance of the Green Flame

Ahhh, tiny one, you don't know how much please you give me. So hover all you wish; dillydally for as long as you want to. Amongst the green luxuriance of this fruit tree grove, your green iridescence illuminates all. You flash as you fly, so go ahead and do your thing, little hummingbird; I've got all day today, to sit and be mesmerised, by your Green Flame Dance.

Here are the links to the two online folklore projects
YAN DAWA and NUNU

yandawa.substack.com

<https://reggaediscography.blogspot.com/2021/11/nunu-celebrating-african-and-caribbean.html>

and the AFRICAN SCHOOL website

africanschool.weebly.com

An African School Production