

Trench Town Culture Yard Designated National Heritage Site

Trench Town Culture Yard, internationally recognised as the cornerstone reggae music, has been designated a Protected National Heritage Site by the Jamaica National Heritage Trust (JNHT), boosting its potential to attract visitors. A ceremony, to unveil a plaque bearing the designation, was hosted by the JNHT Feb. 20, in the Kingston inner city community. Executive Director of the JNHT, Laleta Davis Mattis, in a speech read by Director of Communications, Coleen Douglas, at the ceremony, said that the preservation of the site was a matter of public interest, due to its historic and cultural significance. "For us at the JNHT, it was simple. Based on the rich history of this place and the high esteem by which it is held by the people, we had to designate it a Protected National Heritage Site," she stated. She urged members of the community "to continue to take good care of the site, because you hold it in trust for the entire Jamaica. The stories emanating from here are stories of despair, resilience and triumph. They are inspirational stories that can serve to motivate the youngsters. This, after all, is one of the chief aims of preserving the heritage, so that it can remind us of the past, inform our present and guide our future". The designation of an area as a Protected National Heritage Site means, among other things, that the owner or person (s) in possession of the land, buildings or other property, within the protected area, is prohibited from carrying out any demolition, removal or alteration without the prior approval of the JNHT. Trench Town Culture Yard is widely recognized and respected as providing the roots of Reggae music. The area's unique context and environment provided the inspiration that propelled many of the genre's greatest proponents such as the late Bob Marley, Peter Tosh and Alton Ellis as well as living legend Bunny Wailer, to international acclaim. It was in 2000 that the area was launched as a culture yard. "Research tells us that it was from here, at Culture Yard, that Vincent 'Tata' Ford lived, where he taught Bob Marley to play the guitar, and helped to pen the popular anthem 'No Woman No Cry'," the JNHT Executive Director said. The community had its genesis during the period 1940 - 1949 when the Government's Central Housing Authority constructed a number of houses on two hundred (200) acres of land known as Trench Pen. These government-owned houses or 'government yards' as they would later be called, were built from Seventh Street to First Street between Central Road (now Collie Smith Drive) and West Road. Source: JIS