

## MARLEY: LOVE AND LYRICS

Thirty years after his passing, the lyrics of Bob Marley remains a source of scrutiny from academia -- another example of his immortality in the pantheon of Jamaican music.

For although the king of reggae is more famous for his revolutionary and strident lyrics, he is no less potent in his songs appealing to the female. At the Neville Hall Lecture Theatre on the UWI campus last Thursday &mdash; the eve of International Reggae Day, Professor Carolyn Cooper, gave an amusing analysis of the sexual overtures in the lyrical contents of the Caribbean's first superstar. Focusing on what she deemed "the promiscuous nature of Marley's sexual relationships", the founder of the Reggae Study Unit made it clear that she was reading Bob Marley's lyrics from a feminine perspective, drawing illustrations from four of his more popular songs -- Is This Love, Waiting In Vain, Turn Your Lights Down Low and No Woman Nuh Cry. "When you look at Bob Marley love lyrics, you get a very mixed view of Bob Marley's view of women," asserts Cooper. Beginning with the song, Is This Love, she noted that the reggae icon expresses his love in a very vulnerable way. "The Jamaican man don't like to express vulnerability in love, yuh nuh. Every man want to know sey woman want dem..." She then began her quotation of the song. "Is this love - is this love - is this love - Is this love that I'm feelin'? Is like the thing just lick him and him don't know what it is....him affi a ask is this love... I look at the line 'We'll share the shelter of my single bed.' Single bed suggest monogamy with one bed as oppose to nuff bed, but also a recognition that it can be four but that not stopping you from loving woman to the max." "The other thing I found interesting in that same song, 'I throw my cards on your table!' This suggests something like a game and I am trying to tell you I'm not hiding anything... but still holding a hard end, cyaan come too quick in other words" Turning to Waiting In Vain, Cooper's interpretation is that Marley was sort of peeved because the woman wasnot letting off. And reflects, once again, his feeling of vulnerability. And as if the Rastaman was saying: "Bow I don't know how I catch mi self in this predicament, but I'm gonna check you and I am holding on. Either you going tek mi or you going run mi, tell me mek mi know nuh man." The noted professor then argued. "This is not a side of Bob Marley we often talk about. We talk about the revolutionary and the political side. But I am saying this is the sexual quality and the dynamic relationship between man and woman." When it was time for her take on the lyrics of the song Turn Your Lights Down, Cooper's advice to the ladies was: "If you can get a man fi deh wid like this, you doing well." She then made the point by reciting some words of song. "Turn your lights down low and pull your window curtains, oh let Jah moon come shining in. Him (Bob) want the window open so that the moon can come in... So you have all of these romantic associations. Many don't even know the meaning of that quote... part of the problem that we have in life is that we are expecting these romantic moments. When these romantic moments come, we love it, but when they don't come we are depressed. Here is Bob Marley brightening up a romantic moment, telling us that the Rastaman know bout moonshine and all dem kind of things." In closing with No Woman Nuh Cry, Cooper -- while admitting that to her it is one of the most beautiful songs relating to love &mdash; was her usual provocative self stating that it was Bob's apology to his wife Rita. "Rita got a rough deal because she was the wife, but had to deal with a lot of outside women."