

Diablemlem An Hataclaps

The current global financial crisis can be described as 'diablemlem'. If we do not get our economies back on track, it will be 'hataclaps'.

These words are just two of the wonderful elements of the armoury of the proud Jamaican, who uses his language to make sense of his reality, and in the process befuddle and confuse the rest of the world. They all want to speak the language, and are constantly amazed at its fluidity and its expressiveness. Diablemlem and Hatclaps, fall into the category of compound words which over time have come to be represented as one unit. They are both nouns, but diablemlem can also be used as an adjective (mi no like yuh and yuh diablemlem family). Diablemlem can be used to describe any situation which is in turmoil. It could be an upset stomach, psychological / emotional turmoil, or turmoil / instability within a family, community, economy or country. Meck wi dissect the word tell you how we get there. So I can say 'Mi eat stew peas then drink milk and now mi stomach is in a state of diablemlem.' It is sometimes just a 'bad feeling', something happening but yuh not quite sure what it is, but it is a state of dis-ease, or turmoil. You could also talk about a political party or an economy in a state of diablemlem. The 'dia' part of diablemlem is the first morpheme in the word. (A morpheme is the smallest unit of a language signifying meaning … so it means something). Think of the English word 'dire' which means 'urgent or serious' – same meaning. Now we move to the 'blemlem' part of the word. One of the things which the Jamaican language does is to 'reduplicate' (the reduplication rule in creole) to signify increase. So the language repeats a noun or adjective in order to signify that its meaning is multiplied or increased. 'Blemlem' is similar in meaning to the English 'blend'. So it refers to something which is in a state of 'mix-up', instability or turmoil, but then the reduplication suggests that it is an intensified, increased mix up or turmoil. Add the morpheme 'dia' meaning serious, severe, urgent, to the beginning of the word, and you get a full understanding of diablemlem. Now if the diablemlem is not resolved in good time, then that is where the hataclaps (utter collapse) comes. Let's say you have diarrhea and you don't find a bathroom fast enough, or your emotional situation is not resolved and you engage in antisocial behavior, or if the economy literally comes tumbling down … that is hataclaps. Here's another useful situation to illustrate the beauty of the two words. If three women are pregnant for the same man at the same time, that is diablemlem. When the women find out and turn up together at his work place, or turn on him and beat him to a pulp, that is hataclaps.