

## Jamaican Reggae artistes, politicians irked by Mugabe's statement

Several prominent Reggae acts have expressed their outright displeasure with recent comments made by Zimbabwe's president, Robert Mugabe about Jamaicans.

Mugabe raised the ire of Jamaicans when he commented on the island's culture during a 'distinguished lecture' at the Research and Intellectual Expo 2012 in which he allegedly branded them as weed smokers and drunkards. Mugabe reportedly implied that the Zimbabwean people have been negatively influenced by Jamaica culture while intimating that the island men lack ambition. "Mugabe branded Jamaica as "a country of marijuana smokers, where women are now taking charge since men are always sloshed (drunk), while also stating, "In Jamaica, they have freedom to smoke mbanje, varume vanogara vakadhakwa (men are always drunk) and universities are full of women;The men want to sing and do not go to colleges vamwe vanobva vamonwa musoro (some are dreadlocked). Let us not go there." "Those alleged quotes angered many Jamaicans and caught the eye of a number of artistes who performed for Mugabe in Zimbabwe. One of those acts was international Reggae superstar, Sizzla Kalonji, who performed at a birthday event for the then 86-year-old leader in 2010." Though Sizzla expressed concern about Mugabe's assertions, he didn't take offense to the Zimbabwe president's statements. "Black people are beautiful and courageous, strong, educated and we should keep our heads up and keep sailing high and be determined towards our goals as Zimbabweans and Jamaicans. I personally took no offence to the statement. Marijuana is a holy sacrament being used in the nyahbinghi churchical chanting and singing is a part of our culture from ancient of days, it's even in the bible where Psalms of David said we should sing and give praise unto the most high," Sizzla told the Jamaica STAR. "We love the president and he should assist us as black people to overcome the phangs of hell daunted unto us by the slave masters. He should also take the time and look into our educational system and living conditions, and see how best he can help us towards the redemption and repatriation of our people to Africa." Another veteran artiste who previously performed for Mugabe was Cocoa Tea, who performed alongside fellow Reggae act, Fanton Mojah at a concert in Zimbabwe last October. "That statement is not a true reflection of us as people. Jamaicans are way better than that and we are leaders but everyone is entitled to their own opinion. Sizzla is an educated artiste who has his degree for example. I don't really know how he came up with that conclusion," Cocoa Tea said. Meanwhile, another highly regarded Reggae megastar, Tony Rebel maintained that while he highly respects Mugabe as a revolutionary, the Zimbabwean leader was misguided in his assumptions. "President Mugabe is a man who I have revolutionary respect for but I say 'you are wrong Mr. President' because I am a Jamaican, and I don't smoke and drink for years and I know of many other Jamaicans who don't smoke. That statement is not a true reflection of us as a people because not everybody wants to sing and a lot of our sons are in colleges and the president needs to do his research," he said. Rebel though credited Mugabe for at least making Jamaica a popular topic of discussion in his lecture. "That statement was meant to be an insult but it's actually a compliment because it is because the Jamaican culture is so influential why he found it necessary to include Jamaica in such a distinguished lecture. I wish him the best of health and hope he is not getting senile because he is over 80 years old and he needs to find a successor." In addition to the Reggae contingent's thoughts on this burning issue, a number of Jamaican politicians have weighed in on Mugabe's stereotypical commentary. One such politician is the Opposition Spokesperson on Youth, Sports, Gender Affairs, Entertainment and Culture, Olivia 'Babsy' Grange, who demanded an apology from the Zimbabwe dictator. "I find Mr. Mugabe's statements alarming, to say the least, as he has been to Jamaica and is very much aware that those views are quite contrary to the facts in Jamaica. If true, it is startling that someone, who has himself claimed that his country is a victim of imperceptions fed by the international media, should be using these misconceptions of Jamaican society to describe our people at such a forum of students, intellectual and business and social leaders in his country," Grange told the Jamaica Observer. Jamaica's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade Senator, A.J. Nicholson relayed that the local government has been seeking to verify Mugabe's comments before the country's prime minister, Portia Simpson-Miller can respond to the Zimbabwean leader's aspersions. However, Nicholson intimated that Jamaica's contributions to Africa are well noted and that the island has made tremendous strides in several fields. "We need not remind that Jamaicans such as Marcus Garvey, Michael Manley, Bob Marley and Dudley Thompson have advocated for and inspired generations of our brothers and sisters both in Africa and in the African diaspora. We believe that our contribution to the promotion of peace and social justice is recognized and appreciated by all well-thinking people across the globe," he said. He added that Jamaica takes, "immense pride in the acknowledged contribution that Jamaica has made to the liberation of Southern Africa and was gratified that nations such as South Africa and Zimbabwe enjoy the right to choose their own destiny." Source: examiner.com