

AWAKE ZION

a documentary by Monica Haim

SYNOPSIS

"In an era when every continent seems convulsed by ethnic, religious, and racial violence, examples of cross-national and multi-racial music offer hope for a better future...these cultural creations also testify to the ways in which artists from aggrieved communities can use the very instruments of their displacement and dispossession to forge a new public sphere with emancipatory potential."

- George Lipsitz, *Cultural Crossroads* (Verso: 1994)

Awake Zion is a documentary film that explores the connections between reggae culture and Judaism. It's a story about unsuspecting cultural convergence; a story about shared symbols and themes by people who might seem to be on opposite ends of the spiritual spectrum. Many conversations about Black and Jewish cultures tend to be shrouded in conflict and adversity. Awake Zion hopes to shed light on the positive relationship that may exist there behind the music, behind the laws, and behind the history. Through the themes of music, roots and culture, Awake Zion is an audio-visual dialogue that aims to expose the senselessness of hate or intolerance by highlighting kinship in the face of difference.

The project is the result of my love for reggae music, which now is probably as much a self-identifying aspect of my life and personality as are my deep-seated Jewish roots. I recall seeing the Star of David and hearing the word "Zion" at some of my earliest reggae concerts, images and words that to me always spoke directly of the Jewish experience...images and words from Yeshiva. The more I learned about reggae (and its source, Rastafari) the more I wanted to understand why or how it was connected to the symbols I had previously prescribed as simply being Jewish. This curiosity invariably led me to more questions, and then, unexpectedly, to even more connections.

All the way back to the alleged sultry affair between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, a certain blend of Jewish flavor has crept into the spiritual history of Ethiopia, turning up subtly in Rastafarian lifestyle, and then inevitably in reggae. Consider that one of the first reggae songs ever broadcast on the radio was called "Israelites"; or that religious Rastas and orthodox Jews share fundamental views towards dietary and sexual ethics-not to mention, how they both embrace the notion of repatriation. In Awake Zion, I use reggae music to explore a strand of multiculturalism that exists as a reality of the Jewish and African Diasporas, to not only reinforce ideas about inclusiveness and harmony within their own contemporary mixed urban realities, but also as a message to multicultural communities worldwide.

www.awakezion.net

Twin Goat Productions

Contact: 646-263-5115

monica@awakezion.net