



THE ABSENT FATHER

"My fadda was a guy yunno, from England here, yunno? Him was like...like you can read it yunno, it's one o'dem slave stories: white guy get the black woman and breed her. He's a English guy...I t'ink. Cos me see him one time yunno. My mother? My Mother African."
(BOB MARLEY, 1978)

MARLEY VS MARLEY

WIDE ANGLE DESK

Tall, imperious and imposing, especially on horseback, Captain Marley roamed the plantations of Jamaica bedding many of the teenage daughters of the estate workers he was supposed to oversee.

According to local gossip, he seems to have been a British naval captain who came from Essex and had once served in India, but he ended up working for the British colonial service in the Jamaican backwoods in the Forties.

Captain Marley's brief liaisons resulted in a number of children. And one of his lovers was 18-year-old gospel singer Cedella Booker.

Their son, Robert Nesta Marley was born in 1945 and spent his formative years living in considerable poverty in the slums of Jamaica.

When he was growing up, Bob looked so different from his black family that he was often known as "the German", because in contrast to them he looked somewhat European.

Feeling an outsider in both the black and white communities, his isolation became the driving force behind his will to succeed.

Norval Sinclair Marley, born in the UK in 1885, was rarely talked about, even by those closest to his reggae star son.

"The guy didn't exist. There was a photograph of him on a horse, a white man on a horse," said actress Esther Anderson, who became Bob Marley's girlfriend in the 1970s.

Bob himself rarely talked about his father, she said, and when he did it was in often scathing terms.

Now, for the first time, filmmaker Kevin Macdonald has put a face to Bob's philanthropic father. He can be seen in a photo-



Bob with mother Cedella and half-sister Pearl in 1961.

graph out in the fields, on horseback as usual, ready to throw his weight around with the workers.

Macdonald also found a rare picture of Bob. Tall and skinny, the teenager had a short back-and-sides haircut in the days before he discovered dreadlocks.

His thin face reflects many of his father's aquiline features -- not that young Robert had much chance to discover that for himself as Captain Marley did not tarry

long after his son's birth. There was little contact between father and son as the boy was growing up.

Capt Marley was about 60 when he met Cedella Malcolm. The couple separated soon after Bob's birth in February 1945.

Then, when Bob was just ten, Captain Marley died suddenly of a heart attack.

His mother Cedella, still only 28, was left in such extreme poverty that she was forced to make her way to Jamaica's capi-

tal, Kingston, in search of work, leaving her young son with her family.

Bob eventually followed her to Kingston, where they settled in a corrugated-iron shack in a street with open sewers in the Trenchtown area, one of the roughest parts of the capital.

Here, he was confronted in the starkest terms with the reality of his mixed parentage.

He was taunted mercilessly by his peers for standing out from the crowd. Indeed, he longed so much to fit in that, as his 65-year-old widow Rita has recently revealed, he used to black his face with boot polish. She says he even married her -- when he was 21 and she 19 -- because, unlike him, she was completely black.

Bob believed and used to say "When one door is closed, don't you know, another is open". His found his open door -- music. "One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain," he famously said.

Aside from his struggles for acceptance, he had yearning to sing, to play his guitar. His musical talent would propel him to super-stardom as one of the biggest record industry earners of all time and one of the demi-gods of popular music from the 70s to the present day.

Today, more than 30 years after his death, people still sing his Redemption Song: "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery/None but ourselves can free our minds."

Capt Marley, the white man on a horse, in the meantime disappeared into the shadows of history, but his last name would of course never quite be forgotten. His son has ensured it.

SOURCE: BBC, MAILONLINE
ALL PHOTOS: COLLECTED



THE REJECTION AND THE REBEL'S REPLY

WIDE ANGLE DESK

Built upon a line from Psalm 118 -- "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone" -- the 1970 song from Bob Marley & the Wailers, "Cornerstone", can be interpreted as a universal underdog's anthem, like so many Marley classics before and since.

But a new documentary film, *Marley*, suggests that Bob recorded this particular song after being rebuffed by the family of his white father, Captain Norval Marley.

Bob's wife Rita Marley explains that he essentially over-compensated for his fair skin by becoming socially and politically, blacker than black. That embrace of his blackness was also a consequence of the rejection he suffered. Marley was abandoned by his father at birth. As an adolescent he sought out and attempted to forge a connection with the wealthy side of the Marley family, only to be spurned.

In the film, Peter Marley, Bob's second cousin on his father's side, talks about the time Bob walked into the family construction business seeking money from his relatives -- only to be rejected. The story goes like the song was born from this event.

The stone that the builder refused,
Will always be the head cornerstone.
Sing it, brother!

The stone that the builder refused
Will always be the head cornerstone.

You're a builder - here I am a stone.
Don't you think and refuse me
'Cause the things people refuse,
Are the things they should use.
Do you hear me? Hear what I say!

One of the more poignant and inspired moments in the film comes when the director lends a set of earphones and iPod to those relatives to hear the song.

They listen to the song with pained facial expressions as they reflect on the fact that Bob has become the Marley, the illegitimate Rasta son who was rejected by his military father is now the only reason the Marley name is renowned around the world. Prophecy fulfilled.

[SOURCE: NPR.ORG, HUFFPOST, COMPLEX.COM]

The 'neurotic captain'

WIDE ANGLE DESK

Norval Marley's war record casts a brief light on his story.

Giving his place of birth as East Sussex, he enlisted in Liverpool on 12 August 1916, after arriving from Cuba, via the US.

At 1.65m tall and weighing 56kg, Norval gave his occupation as a construction engineer.

He was declared fit and, like many others, he soon found himself at one of the war's biggest training camps, at Park Hall, near Oswestry, in Shropshire.

Home to more than 20,000 men, most were trained in trench warfare at the site, ready for the frontline. Norval Marley, however, was not to be among them, local historian Keith Pybus said.

In September 1916 he reported sick at Park Hall as a result of a strain during training with the 10th Liverpool Scottish. Pybus said the medical report described him as a "neurotic type of man" who claimed "incontinence of urine" and told doctors he wet the bed at night.

A month later he was sent to the military hospital in Oswestry, where he underwent an operation, despite the fact no problem was found.

He was soon transferred to a support battalion, which eventually became the Labour Corps, and would never see

frontline action, rather spending the war in the UK.

Pybus said: "[Those battalions are] called salvage companies, but sewage might be closer to the truth. It's laundry, it's sanitation.

"If you're unfortunate enough in the army to be wetting the bed, that does not especially make you look as if you're of heroic status."

Records show Mr Marley later received a pension because of "ill health caused by army service" for "incontinence of urine and non attributed rheumatism".

Later rumours that he had been a captain in the Royal Marines were "romanticised", Pybus said, although it was unclear whether Mr Marley himself was responsible for them.

It is said that after the war his namesake worked in Lagos, Nigeria, either in the Military Police or the local army, while the country was a British colony, and he acquired the title of captain while stationed there.

Ms Anderson said many of the stories about Mr Marley came from Bob's mother Cedella and seem to have had little or no truth about them.

Park Hall itself was to follow its one-time resident, Norval Marley, into obscurity.

The old hall that gave the site its name was burned down on Boxing Day 1918.

After the war other buildings fell into disrepair, though WWII would see troops return for training, with it also serving as a prisoner of war camp.

After 1945, it remained in use by the military until it closed in 1975 though would see neither the troop numbers nor importance that it held during

WWI.

Today, much of it is used as farmland, although parts of the original site feature a visitor attraction, while other fields make up a showground.

SOURCE: BBC



Cedella Booker with the protrait of her late son.



Bob and Rita on their wedding day in 1966.