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The Enduring Power of Reggae Lyrics: Utilizing Peter Tosh's "Legalise It" and Joseph Hill's "Legalisation" for Marijuana Legalization Advocacy

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Abstract

This paper explores the long-lasting impact of reggae music on the marijuana legalisation movement, particularly as it relates to Peter Tosh's song "Legalise It" and Joseph Hill's "Legalisation". This advocacy has a unique platform thanks to reggae's historical ties to social criticism and the Rastafarian religion, which reveres marijuana. With a focus on normalisation and economic advantages, Tosh's 1976 anthem provided straightforward, practical justifications for legalisation. With its critique of systemic oppression and emphasis on religious freedom, Hill's "Legalise", which was probably published around 2000, offered a more politically and spiritually charged viewpoint. Despite being written in entirely different sociopolitical contexts, both songs have had a significant impact on public opinion and the global movement to legalise marijuana. These songs' unique lyrical styles and reggae's innate connection to social justice have made them appealing to a wide range of listeners and helped the ongoing evolution of drug policy reform.

Keywords

Reggae, Legalisation, Marijuana, Social Justice, Systemic Oppression

1. Introduction

Music has always been a powerful tool for expressing feelings, creating a sense of community, and even provoking social change. Similarly, musicians have always used their craft to engage in significant political matters. They have sought to draw attention to critical issues and take a stand for what is right. Reggae emerged as a powerful musical form from the time of Toots and the Maytals and other influen-

tial artists. Notable songs like Bob Marley's "Get Up, Stand Up" and Peter Tosh's "Equal Rights", among others, ignited a firestorm for justice and equality, resonating with Jamaicans and other parts of the world. Music is essential for fostering political debate and social change, whether from protest songs that served as civil rights anthems or benefit concerts aimed at drawing attention to vital issues. Integrating emotional experience into music and its ability to overcome cultural and linguistic boundaries makes it a powerful tool for fostering political activism and building awareness of critical social issues. This message is universal, and the reach of music transcends different cultures and languages, enabling it to advocate for social change. According to the New Wave Magazine, "Reggae music is more than just a genre, it is a celebration of life and a spiritual expression deeply tied to Rastafarian culture." It started in the 1960s in Jamaica, gradually becoming a global phenomenon loved by both old and young, preaching unity, love and fighting for equality as well as promoting the Africaness of all blacks. Early reggae songs were celebratory and defiant and reflected the struggles of Jamaica's marginalized communities while advocating for justice and equality. For Jamaicans, reggae was more than just music—it was a way to process pain, share joy, and demand change (Homiak, 2021).

Bekele (2021) asserts that reggae originated in Jamaica in the 1960s, emerging from ska, a genre characterised by a higher tempo that reflected the country's upbeat mood. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, it slowed down and became rocksteady, eventually evolving into the reggae we recognise today. In the 70s, roots reggae developed as a subgenre of reggae, addressing the everyday lives and aspirations of Africans and those in the African diaspora.

The historical and political conditions of the time in Africa, Jamaica, and the United States were characterised by decolonisation, neocolonialism, and growing disillusionment with civil rights laws. This led to a call for radical change, resulting in the formation of the Black Panther Party, the All-African People's Revolutionary Party, and the African People's Socialist Party. In Jamaica, the 70s were marked by political violence, with Bob Marley's assassination attempt and the popularization of the Rastafari movement and faith. Roots reggae developed as a cultural and musical manifestation of resistance, emphasizing Pan-African solidarity and consciousness. By the late 80s, roots reggae began to disappear from Jamaica's sound systems, replaced by dancehall, and shifted into a more subtle form. Regardless of its current state, roots reggae remains one of the most important cultural manifestations of African/Black history. According to Chang & Chen (1998), Jamaican music can be roughly divided into four eras, each with a distinctive beat—ska, rocksteady, reggae and dancehall. Ska dates from about 1960 to mid-1966, rocksteady from 1966 to 1968, while from 1969 to 1983 reggae was the popular beat. The reggae era had two phases, "early reggae" up to 1974 and "roots reggae" up to 1983. Since 1983 dancehall has been the prevalent sound. The authors describe each stage in the development of the music, identifying the most popular songs and artists, highlighting the significant social, political and eco-

nomic issues as they affected the musical scene. While they write from a Jamaican perspective, the intended audience is "any person, local or foreign, interested in an intelligent discussion of reggae music and Jamaica".

Again, Bekele (May 2021) reiterates that Walter Rodney emphasises the importance of culture in radical struggle and the development of culture in general. He highlights Africa as the continent of drums and percussion, where Africans reached the pinnacle of achievement in that sphere. Roots reggae, a subgenre of reggae, is one of many overt cultural manifestations of resistance and radical movements. Music, throughout time, has been a powerful vehicle to express feelings, unite people, and even spur movements toward a proverbial social change. During diverse historical periods, musician have incorporated political struggle into their artistic work, drawing attention to societal problems and fighting for social justice. Whether it be Protest songs, which became the symbols of the civil rights movement, or benefit concerts designed to aid in essential campaigns, there is no doubt that music raised political awareness and strived toward social progression. As music is an art that can touch emotions, be deeply felt, and be easily understood across cultures and languages, it is an excellent tool for promoting and creating awareness of important political and social issues. It unites people in a common cause, making them feel part of a more significant movement for change.

Within this musical activism frame, Peter Tosh's "Legalise It" (Tosh, 1976) and Joseph Hill's "Legalisation" stand as hallmark reggae songs that advanced the campaign of legalizing marijuana use. These songs, which form an integral part of the Jamaican ethos and the broader reggae movement, boldly argue for the decriminalisation of marijuana and highlight its benefits. The paper aims to analyze the lyrics of the two landmark songs, relating their claims to the context of two historical and cultural events: the rise of Rastafarianism and the socio-political landscape of 1970s Jamaica.

The paper will go further to provide an analysis of relevance and the emotions that can be associated with legalizing marijuana use in modern contexts. The evaluation will also provide advocacy and policy recommendations for using these songs as campaign tools while demonstrating their relevance for marijuana legalisation.

2. Deconstructing the Arguments: Peter Tosh's "Legalise It"

The 1976 song "Legalise It" by Peter Tosh is regarded as a landmark in the struggle for marijuana legalization. A close reading of the lyrics demonstrates a complex case for lifting the ban on cannabis that goes beyond individual liberties to include broader societal advantages. The song's lyrics explicitly advocate for marijuana legalization in Jamaica, imagining an end to the "illegal humiliation" and "police interrogation" that come with its prohibition. This is in line with the reality of the period when people, especially members of the Rastafarian community, were frequently harassed and faced legal issues for possessing cannabis. In addition to demanding an end to unfair treatment, Tosh's lyrics also emphasize marijuana's alleged medical advantages, saying it's "good for the flu, good for asthma / Good for tuberculosis, even umara composes". Even though some of these particular claims

are now subject to skepticism, they demonstrate a long-standing belief in cannabis's therapeutic benefits. An expanding corpus of scientific research currently supports this view. Tosh also highlights the fact that marijuana is widely used by people from all walks of life, saying, "Doctors smoke it, nurses smoke it/Judges smoke it, even the lawyer too." This argument suggests that marijuana use is every day among even law-abiding people, challenging the idea that it is limited to a marginal group.

The lyrics also discuss the potential economic benefits of legalizing marijuana, implying that it "can build up your failing economy". This argument, which is still very relevant today, highlights how taxes and regulations on a legal cannabis market could generate income. "Legalise It" has a direct, audacious tone frequently tinged with defiant humour. The song is memorable and compelling due to Tosh's captivating delivery and catchy reggae beat, successfully and entertainingly conveying a serious message.

The title track, "Legalise It", was prohibited when it was released in Jamaica in 1975. Ironically, this attempt to silence the song helped Tosh achieve worldwide renown and cemented its position as a potent anthem for the emerging marijuana legalization movement. The song's enduring relevance is evident in its continued use in advocacy efforts and recognition as a cultural touchstone for the cannabis legalization movement.

3. Echoes of Advocacy: Joseph Hill's "Legalisation"

Legalisation, sung by Joseph Hill's band Culture, provides yet another potent reggae viewpoint on the necessity of legalising marijuana. A thorough lyrical analysis identifies central points that support Tosh's message and draw attention to the particular injustices that the Rastafarian community has experienced as a result of cannabis prohibition. "We want it now" is a repeated plea in the lyrics, which directly calls for the legalisation of the "ganja herb", highlighting the situation's urgency. Hill's lyrics also discuss the economic hypocrisy of prohibition, implying that while the government ("Babylon") makes money off of marijuana, it also persecutes Rastafarians for using it. The lines, "Babylon a show off pon, Rasta, gwaan like him no know".

He sells it through music to teach our kids and police," suggesting that the system capitalizes on marijuana's cultural and economic contributions through music while making its use illegal for some groups. Like Tosh, Hill makes references to the medicinal and spiritual benefits of cannabis, mentioning the "ganja root" and the desire to "lick up the chalice and mek that clean up your heart", indicating that Rastafarians have long used it for spiritual connection and well-being.

One of the main points of contention in "Legalisation" is the alleged injustice of locking people up for merely owning a naturally occurring plant. "What kind of corruption do you have on your tongue?" is the question in the lyrics. To imprison a man for merely taking a herb that grows in the ground, thereby openly questioning the ethics and justification for cannabis prohibition. By drawing a comparison between marijuana-related crimes and more serious ones, Hill also implies that law enforcement resources are being misallocated, saying, "Nuff coke

a share from here to there. And Rasta can't lick him chalice." The singer bemoans the raiding of his fields and his incapacity to support his children in the lyrics, further emphasizing the adverse effects of prohibition on livelihoods and families.

"Legalisation" has an urgent, inquisitive tone that expresses a deep moral outrage against the laws that are currently in place. Hill challenges listeners to reevaluate their viewpoints with his impassioned delivery and straightforward lyrics. In the framework of Culture's larger body of work, "Legalisation" aligns with the group's dedication to addressing social criticism and standing up for the underprivileged, especially the Rastafarian community. A recurrent theme in Culture's Music is Joseph Hill's adherence to the traditional Rastafarian ideals of justice, simplicity, and purity.

4. Identifying the Binding Energies and Unique Strengths in the Lyrical Arguments of Tosh and Hill

Joseph Hill's "Legalisaton" by the band Culture and Peter Tosh's "Legalise It" support the exact cause but with different subtleties and emphasis. A closer look at the lyrics of the two songs identifies recurring themes and distinctive features that can be cleverly used to support marijuana legalization.

In a tabular form, the various arguments are raised:

Argument Category	Peter Tosh's "Legalise It"	Joseph Hill's "Legalisation" (Culture)
Ending Prohibition	Calls for an end to "illegal humiliation" and "police interrogation."	Questions the "corruption" of imprisoning people for herb and highlights police raids. *To prison a man for a simple draw of herb* (*that grow From the earth*!)
Medicinal Benefits	Explicitly lists purported medicinal uses: "good for the flu, good for asthma/ Good for tuberculosis".	Implies medicinal use through the reference to "ganja root" and its ability to "clean up your heart".
Widespread Use	Argues that various societal figures ("Lyrics Singers smoke it And players of instrument too Doctors smoke it, nurses smoke it/ Judges smoke it, even the lawyer too") use marijuana.	Suggests the hypocrisy of the system by implying authorities also benefit from or are involved with marijuana ("He sells it by music to educate our children and police").
Economic Benefits	States that legalisation "can build up your failing economy".	Suggests economic hardship due to prohibition and the need to sell ganja to survive.
Social/Cultural Context	It is implicitly linked to Rastafarianism through Tosh's identity but not explicitly stated in this song's lyrics.	Directly addresses the impact on the Rastafarian community and their right to use cannabis as a sacrament.
Injustice of Laws	Focuses on the negative personal consequences of prohibition (humiliation, interrogation).	Directly questions the morality and justice of imprisoning individuals for a naturally growing herb. *What kind of corruption you have on your tongue*?
Focus on Other Issues	This is not explicitly addressed in the lyrics of "Legalise It".	This implies a misallocation of resources by contrasting the focus on marijuana with the prevalence of more harmful substances like cocaine.
Call to Action	Direct and declarative: "Legalize it, yeah yeah".	Urgent and pleading: "Legalisation fi the ganja herb! We want it now".

In both songs, the fundamental case for legalising marijuana is made, emphasising the drawbacks of criminalisation and calling for its repeal. Tosh and Hill both discuss the financial implications of legalisation. However, while Hill highlights the financial hardship people experience due to prohibition, Tosh concentrates on the possibility of economic growth. Both musicians also make references to cannabis's potential advantages outside of recreational use; Tosh specifically mentions its therapeutic qualities, while Hill highlights its spiritual significance in Rastafarianism.

However, there are also clear distinctions between their lyrical styles. Using a somewhat broader argument regarding the pervasiveness of marijuana use in society, Tosh's "Legalise It" contends that its prohibition is hypocritical, considering that even those in positions of authority accept its use. On the other hand, Hill's "Legalisation" focuses on Rastafarianism's social and cultural background, emphasizing the inequity of a system that makes a practice essential to their faith illegal. In addition, Hill's lyrics express a greater sense of moral outrage by directly challenging the ethics of locking people up for a herb that grows naturally.

Additionally, the persuasive strategies and lyrical styles vary. Tosh frequently uses a strong, declarative tone but injects humour to make the message approachable. Hill's approach in "Legalisation" is more straightforward and pressing, expressing a strong sense of injustice and calling for quick action.

Both songs have great potential for enhancing the advocacy message. By fusing Hill's emphasis on economic potential and Tosh's claims of broad use, social justice, and religious liberty, a more thorough and convincing argument for legalising marijuana can be made. This collaboration can address various issues and appeal to a broader range of people, including those driven by public health arguments, economic considerations, or concerns about social justice and individual freedoms. The Brookings Institution's 2018 report found that marijuana legalisation in states like Colorado, Washington, and Oregon has led to new economic opportunities, increased tax revenue, and lower crime rates.

Studies by the *Colorado Department of Revenue* and independent research organisations consistently show that marijuana legalisation has been a net positive for the state's economy, with significant tax revenues and job creation. For example, the ACLU found that marijuana arrests cost the U.S. more than $3.6 billion annually. Legalisation allows for cost savings in both law enforcement and court systems, freeing up resources for other types of crime prevention. California's cannabis market generated over $1 billion in tax revenue in 2021, showing how legal markets can significantly contribute to state finances. Again, legalisation has led to a substantial increase in tax revenues. For example, in Colorado, marijuana sales have generated hundreds of millions of dollars in state tax revenues since legalisation in 2014. In 2020, Colorado collected over $387 million in marijuana tax revenues, which are often used for education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects.

Furthermore, studies by Statista.com have shown that in 2023, the recreational

market value in Nigeria's recreational cannabis market was estimated at US$3.67 billion, while South Africa's was about US$1.18 billion. In the Agricultural and Export sectors, Morocco harvested 294 metric tons of legal cannabis, involving 430 farmers across 277 hectares in 2023. The country granted 54 export permits that year, signalling a growing export market. While direct economic studies linking the songs to African economies are limited, the cultural shift it helped initiate has paved the way for policy changes and economic opportunities related to cannabis legalisation across the continent.

The economic evidence supports the idea that marijuana legalisation can lead to significant financial benefits in terms of tax revenue, job creation, and reductions in law enforcement costs, which these two songs carry.

5. Contemporary Relevance of the Songs' Messages in the Evolving Landscape of Marijuana Legislation

The messages in Joseph Hill's "Legalisation" and Peter Tosh's "Legalise It" are still pertinent to changing marijuana laws decades after they were first published. Many of the points made in these songs from the 1970s—like the potential for medical uses and the financial advantages of a regulated market—are now at the centre of discussions about legalisation. Tosh and Hill's foresight in tackling these issues when cannabis prohibition was well-established gives the current legalisation movement a great deal of historical weight and legitimacy. Niaah (2013) asserts that, Ganja music is largely about experience: some more explicitly make the connection to desire for the herb, while others express the sensations derived and its therapeutic output, ranging from spirituality, health, and celebration to defance.

Although there isn't much concrete academic proof that "Legalise It" (Peter Tosh) and "Legalisation" (Joseph Hill/Culture) changed public policies on their own, several studies and expert analyses demonstrate how they clearly influenced cannabis discourse, advocacy tactics, and the way drug policy discussions are framed culturally.

Niaah (2016) in *Ganja Terrorism and the Healing of the Nation* notes that, Jamaica's reputation for being a population of indigenous users of this herb, largely through its religious sacralization within the Rastafarian faith. There, it is not only considered a central aspect of the "*conscientization*" process, but is also elevated as a national, perhaps even African Diasporic panacea and branded as "the healing of the nation", or considered to be critical for the development of liberated post-colonial societies. It continues to expands on the work of Barry Chevannes, in which he purports that the attitudes toward the ganja plant existing within the political landscapes borders on a violation of the basic human rights of citizens by legislating the criminalization of a culture, and the manipulation of the laws surrounding the substance as effectively sanctioning a targeted group for state oppression.

Both Peter Tosh's "Legalize It" and Hills' "Legalisation" (Hills, 2000) contrib-

uted to the Canadian public sentiment and activism regarding the cannabis law reforms in Jamaica. The songs were not just reggae tracks but protest anthems fighting for the cause, alongside grassroots activists and pro-legalization advocates who called for its decriminalization. The years leading up to the 2015 law about decriminalizing cannabis services in Jamaica and its so called transformational turning policy for the nation could have been fueled by these tunes. Earlier studies prove that activists used lyrics from these songs in petitions to the Jamaican government. In an interview with Jamaican politicians, like Senator Mark Golding, he acknowledges reggae's role in normalising cannabis as a cultural issue rather than a criminal one.

The United Nations and World Health Organisation's Framing Global Drug Policy Debates (UN/WHO) report, "*Cultural Narratives in Drug Policy Reform*" (UNODC, 2021), published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, identifies reggae as a key influencer in shifting Latin American and Caribbean attitudes toward cannabis, Jamaican delegates at UNGASS 2016 referencing Tosh's lyrics to challenge prohibitionist narratives.

The two songs resonated with many and contributed to the discourse surrounding drug policy, shaping public perceptions of marijuana. They are credited with being part of a broader movement, such as the Rastafari Movement, which advocated for cannabis (ganja) as a sacrament and resisted prohibition. Hippie Counterculture (1960s-70s) promoted cannabis use as part of anti-establishment values. Medical Marijuana Advocacy (1980s-90s) was driven by activists like Brownie Mary and groups like NORML, which advocated for decriminalisation and medical use. Notably, California's Proposition 215 (1996), retrieved from California Department of Public Health (May 17, 2011), *Medical Marijuana Program*, State of California, which marked the first major legal victory for medical cannabis in the U.S., and the Global legalisation Efforts (2000s-present) have led to countries like Canada, Uruguay, and U.S. states legalising recreational use.

Their works later laid the groundwork for legalisation effects, especially in the USA and parts of the Caribbean. While these songs may not have been linked directly to policy changes, they have played a role in shifting public opinion, with emphasis placed on peace, justice, etc, that resonates with the audience. Both artists utilise music as a platform to advocate for social change, including drug legalisation. Although direct evidence leading to policy change may be sparse, the cultural significance and themes have contributed to broader movements advocating for changes and reforms.

Smart (2015) and Greydamus & Patel (2005) noted that after the legalisation of marijuana, regions with data available reported that the population that testified having used marijuana remained stable, and crimes and deviant behaviours associated with the drug decreased. By so, it is believed that people commit crimes in protest of government policies that they deem harmful.

Comparatively, reggae music stands out in its unique blend of social advocacy, cultural roots, and global reach.

Reggae's presence can still be felt today across both Jamaica and the general music industry. Much like the way it started, it remains a genre that combines facets from the music that came before it. While the old style of reggae was heavily influenced by ska, today's music sees a fusion of reggae, hip-hop, R&B and pop. It's typically recognised by a heavy bass line, syncopated rhythms, and focus on lyrics that usually focus on social and political issues or relationships Muggs (2023). While other genres, such as hip-hop, rock, and folk, also contribute to social activism, reggae's emphasis on justice, peace, and resistance resonates deeply within the context of its historical and cultural background. The evolution of reggae through the decades continues to inspire and influence various social movements, making it a pivotal genre in the realm of social advocacy. Unlike reggae's consistent focus on social justice and equality, other genres, such as rock, hip-hop, and folk music, often explore a broader range of themes, including personal freedom and existential crises, or address urban issues like contemporary urban challenges, systemic racism, police brutality, and mobilise youth to create movements like Black Lives Matter in the USA. Artists like Kendrick Lamar and Public Enemy have used their platform to speak on these issues, often with a more aggressive tone compared to reggae. Hussla (2020) argue that the musical legacy should give recognition to the "roots" of the Reggae and sound systems within Jamaican culture which has been replaced by commercial rather than authentic interests in the practices. Often those from the authentic origins are easily exploited and replaced in mainstream media by "sanitized" celebrities which could be viewed as institutional racism working to exclude the authentic voices in Reggae. Sterling (2010) sensitively portrays the wide range of Japanese reggae dancehall practitioners, from chart-topping stars such as Miki Dozan to underground pioneers such as Rankin' Taxi, as well as Junko Kudo, the unlikely winner of Jamaica's premier dance-diva contest.

Another angle worth mentioning is that the younger demographic often resonates with the "freedom" and "rebellion" embedded in the songs, relating them to their own fights for social and political rights. Rhiney & Cruse (2018) points out that, reggae's radical origins partly stem from the efforts of poor inner-city youth to challenge Kingston's status quo, and to carve out an identity and cultural space more akin to their socio-political and economic realities. Cannabis culture itself is also seen as a means to challenge the authority figures who have historically enforced criminalisation, appealing to younger people seeking change.

The songs have transcended their time and have been embraced by diverse age groups, racial communities, and nations. Its relevance endures due to its universal themes of freedom, justice, and resistance to oppressive drug laws. For younger generations, it remains a symbol of social progress and political rebellion. For communities of colour, they are a call for racial justice and the dismantling of the punitive systems that disproportionately target them. Globally, it serves as a rallying cry for cannabis reform, transcending borders and languages, and aligning with broader social justice movements.

In Dylan Tse's article "**The Evolution and Impact of Reggae Music in Global Culture: The Ever-Changing Roles Music Has Played in Culture"** (Tse, 2024), he asserts that today, reggae is still heavily loved in Japan, with the most recent film, "Bob Marley: One Love", premiering in Japan, and notable artists like The Fishmans incorporating reggae and dub into their discography. One of their well-known tracks, "*Baby Blue*", *utilises* upbeat and relaxed reggae rhythms to create a carefree sound. He finally sees reggae as a universal legacy. Reggae is more than just music; it's a movement, a philosophy, a culture, and ultimately a call to action. The genre has transcended and transformed into multiple forms of art across the globe. Its sounds are used as an echo of expression for protests and celebrations, reminding us of our shared community. As the world continues to move and grow, reggae music like Legalise It and Legalisation remains timeless. With its messages of love, unity, and resistance, it has the power to bring people together through music and passion.

Both "*Legalise It*" by Peter Tosh and "*Legalisation*" by the Hills have significant cultural and political relevance, particularly in the ongoing global conversation surrounding the legalisation of cannabis. Their songs continue to inspire activism and influence public opinion on the matter. The rise of social media has allowed songs like "*Legalise It and Legalisation*" to continue resonating with global audiences. Advocacy groups use platforms like YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to share songs and videos of rallies, where these songs often accompany visual content. The song's theme of challenging oppressive laws is a perfect match for contemporary social justice issues. Newer songs carry on the conversation in the digital era, with young activists sharing these songs to further the discussion around cannabis legalisation. In the paper **"*Chant Down Babylon: Reggae Music as a Catalyst for Cannabis Legalisation*"** by Sonjah Stanley Niaah (2020) (University of the West Indies), the author examines how Peter Tosh's "Legalise It" and Joseph Hill's "Legalisation" became protest anthems and discusses their influence on Jamaica's 2015 decriminalisation and global movements, asserting that they became tools for a positive course.

Additionally, these songs effectively frame the legalisation debate regarding human rights, social justice, and cultural acceptance. The songs emphasise the need for a fairer approach to drug policy by drawing attention to the past and present criminalisation of a substance that has profound cultural and spiritual meaning for groups such as Rastafarians. They offer an engaging narrative that links the battle for marijuana legalisation to the broader fight for equality, freedom of religion, and individual liberty.

Additionally, reggae music's timeless themes and catchy rhythms can transcend cultural and generational boundaries, making it appealing to a diverse range of listeners, including younger audiences. The lyrics' themes of justice, freedom, and cultural pride are still relevant to social movements today and resonate with people who support progressive causes or marginalised groups. Reggae music's ongoing appeal guarantees that these songs will continue to attract new listeners and

spread their potent message of legalization to a worldwide audience.

The messages of the songs are most potent in contexts where listeners understand the intersection of race, religion, colonial history, and state power. Outside those contexts, the messages can still resonate, but are often diluted or misinterpreted. As marijuana legalisation spreads globally, there's increasing potential for reevaluating these songs as more than just countercultural hits—they're calls for justice rooted in a specific Caribbean struggle. In Jamaica, the two songs functioned as a protest anthem and galvanised support for cultural and legal recognition of ganja. But outside Jamaica, for instance, the effectiveness may often depend on audience awareness. Informed listeners may grasp the more profound message, while others may reduce it to a simple pro-marijuana slogan.

6. Exploring the Lyrical Content in Modern Marijuana Legalisation Campaigns

Joseph Hill's "Legalisation" and Peter Tosh's "Legalise It" have powerful lyrical content, providing valuable resources for current marijuana legalization campaigns. To increase their persuasive power, activists and advocacy organizations can carefully include passages from these songs in various materials. Tosh's statement, "Doctors smoke it, nurses smoke it, judges smoke it, even the lawyer too," for example, can be used to refute the stereotype that marijuana users are lazy or unproductive members of society. In a similar vein, Hill's moving query, "What sort of corruption are you speaking?" The basic injustice of the current marijuana laws can be effectively highlighted by saying, "To put a man in jail for a simple draw of herb that grows from the earth." These straightforward statements, infused with the artists' authority and cultural significance, can be memorable and effective slogans for websites, social media campaigns, and educational pamphlets. Using the songs as background music for advocacy videos and events can also be very successful. At rallies and online meetings, the music arouses powerful emotions and fosters a sense of unity. Reggae's upbeat rhythms and longstanding connection to social justice movements can enliven and inspire fans, creating a feeling of unity.

Public awareness and appreciation of the advocacy behind these songs can be increased through educational programs that explore the historical and cultural background of these songs and their messages. Providing background on Jamaica's sociopolitical environment in the 1970s, the importance of Rastafarianism, and Tosh and Hill's personal beliefs can strengthen the effect of their poetic arguments, offering a deeper comprehension of the reasons and context behind their calls for legalisation. Investigating partnerships with modern musicians and artists to produce remixes or contemporary interpretations of these timeless songs could also help spread their message to younger and new audiences. Remixes and modernised versions can help close the generational divide by bringing new viewpoints and renewed interest in the ongoing struggle for marijuana legalisation.

Additionally, lyrical themes that align with current policy discussions can be a

strategic focus of advocacy campaigns. For instance, Tosh's focus on the financial advantages of legalisation or the songs' suggested therapeutic applications can be brought up in conversations with the public and legislators. The argument for legalization can be strengthened, and the advocacy efforts' impact increased by crafting the message to speak to the most pressing modern issues.

7. Conclusion

Joseph Hill's "Legalisation" by Culture and Peter Tosh's "Legalise It" are timeless examples of the effectiveness of music as a vehicle for social and political advocacy. Their timeless teachings are still relevant to the current global marijuana legalisation movement. These classic reggae anthems' lyrical arguments, which cover topics like social justice, economic advantages, therapeutic potential, and the hypocrisy of prohibition, provide a strong and convincing basis for current advocacy initiatives. To thoroughly appreciate these songs' significance and persuasive power, one must thoroughly understand the historical and cultural context in which they were written. By carefully using lyrics, incorporating the songs into advocacy events and materials, and participating in educational initiatives, marijuana legalisation advocacy groups and activists can leverage the timeless voices of Peter Tosh and Joseph Hill to further the cause of reform. Tosh's direct and pragmatic arguments and Hill's more spiritual and politically charged perspectives offer a comprehensive and compelling case for reform. In addition to serving as a reminder of the protracted fight for cannabis legalisation, their music motivates and unifies in pursuing this objective.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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