

# Bob Marley - Reggae Prophet

*The following is an editorial which appeared in  
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**TO JAMAICANS,** he was a near-mythic national hero. To millions of young people throughout the developed world, he was a gifted musician whose haunting, hypnotic reggae music introduced them to a Third World perception of life.

He was Bob Marley, a child of Kingston's Trench Town slums, a school dropout whose musical and lyrical eloquence empowered him to influence millions. He died here Monday, at age 36, of cancer. He made his short life count.

Reggae music blends the power and electronic amplification of rock into the slower, subtler rhythms of the Caribbean. Reggae music is native to Jamaica, springing from there in the 1960s to influence rock and pop around the world. Bob Marley was the world's most popular reggae musician.

Mr. Marley's lyrics held intellectual content. They were drawn from his background and overlaid atop a captivating, pulsating backbeat. His lyrics quietly and forcefully castigated a world that consigned millions of human beings to the brutal poverty of racist ghettos while millions of others grew fat on the fruits of "Babylon" consumer societies. His vision, often poetic, held dignity.

Mr. Marley's music and lifestyle were interwoven with his Rastafarian faith, which prophesies a triumphant return to Africa of blacks escaping the corruption of Babylon. His faith gave rise to a lifestyle that many middle-class Americans would find offensive. He smoked marijuana almost constantly, wore his hair in the wild, exploding "dreadlocks" fashion, and fathered nine children by seven different women. Mr. Marley's unusual values were the source of his artistic vision, however. He did not seek middle-class approval, answering only to his understanding of his God, or "Jah".

Bob Marley's contribution to music and to the world's understanding of its own kaleidoscopic variety was large. He died young, sadly. He will be missed.

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