

Bashment Vibes

A WEEKLY LOOK AT THE REGGAE SCENE BY ORANTES MOORE

Lovers flock

Big-hearted Toyin on why she adopted three African children

Toyin Adekale may be one of Britain's best-known lovers rock singers but she is also widely respected for her work behind the reggae scenes.

As well as dropping hits like *It's You and It's Not Love* in 1985, Toyin played a major role in the British Reggae Artist's Famine Appeal song, *Let's Make Africa Green Again*. More recently, she has pledged her support to the Sierra Leone-based charity GYFADA.

In this exclusive interview with *Bashment Vibes*, Toyin talks about the drug problems facing many children in Sierra Leone and explains how she intends to help them.

During a recent visit to Sierra Leone you became involved in a children's charity. Why?

My sister-in-law runs a hospital for war victims in Sierra Leone. In the aftermath of the war, there were a lot of drug addicts so she also became involved in a charity to help them, The Global Youth Foundation Against Drug Abuse (GYFADA).

Initially I went there for a working holiday and to find out about the charity. As we know, there are a lot of charitable causes to subscribe to but we never know exactly where the money goes. I just wanted to see the situation for myself before getting involved.

What did you find out about GYFADA?

GYFADA was founded by Abdul Razack, an ex-combatant and former drug addict. After successfully

completing a detoxification programme, he decided to help other ghetto youths to get themselves clean. He has registered GYFADA as a charity, and now he and my sister in law are trying to raise awareness. They need funding for detoxification and counselling.



Why is drug abuse so prevalent among children in Sierra Leone?

During the war, many children were induced with drugs. Kids as young as six had their veins scratched and were given drugs (usually cocaine) intravenously.

The rebel factions encouraged them to become active in the use of arms against other civilians. Some of the children were forced to kill. Others saw their families killed in front of them and were given the option of staying alive if they promised to kill.

You adopted three of these children, didn't you?

Yes, we adopted two boys and a girl (above). I went to Sierra Leone with two kids and came back with five (smiles).

The youngest boy is four years old. He's kinda nameless; they call him 'American.' He's very sweet but he's also very militant. He walks with his chest forward and his arms behind his back; he marches all over the place. Unfortunately, he's been through the detoxification process but he still has drugs in his system.

Then there's a 15-year-old boy, we call him BS. He's an ex-combatant and he also worked long hours in the [gold and diamond] mines so he has very poor eyesight. Isata is 13 years old. She is a rape victim passed around by the soldiers.

Why is this issue so close to your heart?

I was born [in England], but my mother is from Sierra Leone and my father is from Nigeria.

What caused the war in Sierra Leone?

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The nominations are: Top Male Singer - Lenn Hammond (Beres's nephew, right), Top Female Singer - Sonia Collymore, Top Female Newcomer - Divine and Top International Single - *Run For Your*

Life (Jarvis Church ft. Elephant Man). The winners will be announced in Toronto on March 16.

What surprised you most during your visit?

I don't think there's one person from Sierra Leone who hasn't been affected by the war. Many people have lost their families and properties and so you'd expect a lot of resentment; feelings of revenge. But there's none of that. Everyone smiles. A lot of people just want to put it all behind them. They don't want to talk about the whys and hows - they just want to rebuild and move forward.

Their attitude was really enlightening. I don't know if I could be as forgiving.

Were the people of Sierra Leone aware of your music?

For more info on Fiwi Music and their groundbreaking artists log onto: www.fiwimusic.com.

● BV WOULD like to send its condolences to the family of Vincent Chin. The founder of VP Records (the world's biggest independent distributor of reggae) died of natural causes at his home in Florida earlier this month.

I played them a few of my upcoming releases but really they were more focused on my last album, *From Me To You*.

Also, I performed a really big show while I was out there. That was a real pinnacle for me - performing in my country at the National Stadium alongside Lucky Dube.

What can we expect from Toyin in 2K3?

As well as continuing to work with my talent agency, Talitha Voices, I'm about to release two new singles; *When* and *I'll Be Home Soon*. Also, I have a new album coming out later this year.

● For more info on GYFADA contact Toyin on 07956 937 670 or via email: talithavoices@talk21.com. Look out for a GYFADA fundraising event later this year.

WHA'GWAAN?

● CONGRATULATIONS TO the Fiwi Music camp who have been nominated for no less than four awards at this year's Canadian Reggae Music Awards (CRMA).

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