

# Cultural Impact of the United States

## **Introduction:**

During this period also the U.S. greatly influenced the culture of the Caribbean. This was especially evident in the areas of:

- **Religion**

George Lisle and Moses Baker, two Americans came to Jamaica and opened Churches for the enslaved. Many of the hymnals came from America. The songs were written by Americans.

The television carried religious programs such as Billy Graham's Back to the Bible Broadcast and Oral Roberts Ministries. Missionaries came from America in the 1930's to 1960's to serve in the Salvation Army and Holiness and Pentecostal Churches.

## **Other areas of Cultural Influence**

- **Clothing**
- **Education**
- **Food**
- **Entertainment**
- **Communication**

Caribbean people were exposed to American culture even before the U.S. established bases in the six Caribbean countries during World War 2. A number of persons had migrated to America to look work and or to access a better standard of living. They were the first 'ambassadors' of American culture to the region.

Through the radio and later the television the people of the region were exposed to:

**1. Music-** country music became popular and could be heard in juke boxes all over the Caribbean. Singers such as Marty Robbins come to mind. Radio and television helped in the spread of American music. It was their music that was played on the radio all day. Cowboys such as Gene Autry and others sang during their movie.

Then there were jazz, rock and roll, jive, bebop and gospel. Artistes such as Elvis Presley, Sam Cooke, Duke Ellington and Mahalia Jackson became popular. A number of persons bought their records.

**2.** Programs such as 'The Voice of America', drama serials and news report were heard over the airwaves throughout the Caribbean.

**3.** Dances were associated with each of the different type of music. There were the twist, cha cha cha and the mash potato.



*The Cha Cha Cha*



*The Twist*

4. Local cultural instruments such as the tambourine and maracas were being replaced by the electric guitar that American music idols used.

5. Films and cinemas help to increase the American influence. The lifestyle of the Americans was not only seen on television but at the theatres.

6. Recreational activities such as monopoly and checkers replaced ring games and story telling. In sports, young boys wanted to play basket ball and girls hankered after softball rather than cricket and dandy shandy. Children played cowboy and Indians instead of listening to stories.

7. Even our diet and eating patterns were affected by the U.S. Beer and soda, fast foods such as hamburgers, chips, hot dogs and pizzas replaced yam, banana and flour dumplings.

8. Men and women began to wear Panama hats. Women began to sport pedal pushers (pants). Everyone wanted to own a pair of jeans, Levis or otherwise. The sneakers, t-shirts, nail polish and other cosmetics are on the long list of clothing and accessories that were introduced and made popular by the U.S.



*Panama Hat*



*Pedal pushers*

#### 9. Trends

were also copied with regard to hairstyles. Men began to cut their hair in the famous Tony 'C. Hollywood began to determine the fashions for the Caribbean.

10. Parents switched from English names such as John, Winston, Mary and Elizabeth to American names such as Cliff and Laura (from Little House on the Prairie)

11. American textbooks and novels were sold in stores everywhere. Some were given as gifts to libraries and schools. Girls read the entire series of Nancy Drew while the boys read Hardy Boys.