



James Berry: Windrush songs - Audio

To Travel this Ship

James Berry:

One of the things about Jamaica: people do steal from each other, and sometimes in a cruel way. And the people who have lost, I mean, they know that if they would catch these people they would just kill them.

Jane Dibblin

Do you think that's about desperation, about the level of poverty?

James Berry

Oh yes, oh yes. And the terror of it when you work absolutely in every way that possibly you can do to something for yourself, other people just wait and just watch when the plants are ready and just go and steal them. Then you know that you feel like you would like to kill the whole family of these people.

Jane Dibblin

But when there is nothing between you and hunger, when that was the thing between you and hunger?

James Berry

That's right. Yes, yes, yes. But thank goodness things have changed a great deal. Because a lot of things have happened to change, you know, individuals' abilities to get on with things for themselves, yes.

To Travel this Ship

To travel this ship, man

I gladly strip mi name

of a one-cow, two-goat an a boar pig

an sell the land piece mi father lef

to be on this ship and to be a debtor.

Man, jus fa diffrun days

I woulda sell, borrow or thief

jus fa diffrun sunrise an sundown

in annodda place wid odda ways.

To travel this ship, man
I woulda hurt, I woulda cheat or lie,
I strip mi yard, mi friend and cousin-them
To get this yah ship ride.
Man – I woulda sell mi modda
Jus hopin to buy her back.
Down in dat hole I was
I see this lickle luck, man,
I see this lickle light.
Man, Jamaica is a place
Where generations them start out
Havin notn, earnin notn,
And – dead – leavin notn.
I did wake up every mornin
and find notn change.
Children them shame to go to school barefoot.
Only a penny to buy lunch.
Man, I have follow this lickle light for change.
I a-follow it, man!