

## OPINION &amp; INSIGHTS

# Lessons from King Dezral – Part 2

AS I SEE IT



By Rahym R. Augustin-Joseph

Dezral the “Calyppsonian,” in *Immigrant*, as in all his previous works — and much like his father — uses Kaiso to reflect national, regional and international issues. His music remains a mirror of the people: their fears, hopes, and lived realities.

In *Immigrant*, Dezral revisits a theme I've explored in two earlier pieces — “America's Migrants But Our People” and “Trump 2.0 and the Caribbean.”

He critiques the reversal of a long-standing American ethos under President Donald J. Trump: the idea of the United States as a land of opportunity for immigrants, where hard work could lead to citizenship and a better life.

This ethos not only benefited Caribbean migrants, who found employment and sent vital remittances home, but also strengthened the American economy. For Saint Lucians, it sustained the “barrel child”, and for the US, it provided a reliable labour force.

There's a school of thought that suggests unskilled labour — the kind that keeps the economy running — was largely filled by migrants, as many Americans shunned these jobs. Dezral affirms this in his lyrics: “We go abroad and work so hard, cleaning toilets and yard, doing jobs we always snub, as way beneath our pride, but for Uncle Sam we had no limit, every kind of work will do, and we cleaning his babies bottoms of number one and number two, you know it's true.”

Historically, West Indians have migrated not only for personal advancement but also to build empires, only to be denied citizenship and dignity by those same empires. Dezral's father, the **Mighty Pep**, addressed this in *Shameful Dollar*: “They deporting West Indians in Windrush just

because we black, and those who went from 1948, working hard like Trojans making Britain great and they chasing them out sink or float, what a vile despicable plan, and Elizabeth face laughing at we.”

Dezral echoes this sentiment in *Immigrant*, recounting his childhood dreams of migrating to the US:

“Since I was a jen tibway on our tough Mon Repos land, I used to dream about Uncle Sam and I use to crave to join the man, cause times hard on the mother land so I gone, singing merrily along the way, Uncle Sam here I come and first thing when I meet the man I could clearly understand why so many visa seekers want to shake his hand, hospitality sweet like sugar, best place in the world, but by 2024 November he turn obnoxious and cold, like a troll.”

Globalisation only intensified this dream, especially in developing regions like Dezral's countryside, where opportunities are limited. But by November 2024, that dream soured. The new immigration stance, steeped in racist and nationalist rhetoric, painted immigrants as criminals and burdens.

Dezral counters this narrative: “Never do no crime, he just spent some extra time...”

He highlights the disproportionate punishment and stigma of deportation, calling for humane and legitimate pathways to citizenship rather than criminalisation for political gain.

He also rejects the “lazy immigrant” trope: “Work three jobs for 18 hours, struggling every day, sending money back to mamma...”

Yet, as he laments: “It all crashed last November, as Uncle Sam in disarray.”



Power Soca Monarch, Calypso Monarch and Carnival Road March King Dezral.



Dezral and father, Mighty Pep.

Critics also condemn the methods of enforcement: “Mongoose Gang, called ICE, who squeezes victims like a vice, chaining them in gangs to go, who tracks people like Al Capone, engages in mass deportation.”

The process matters as much as the policy. Mass deportations, often indiscriminate, raise serious human rights concerns.

Even as deportation looms, Dezral offers a solution. He urges to come back home to Mon Repos — “my sanctuary”, sorrowfully wondering “why did he leave MOPO and go, he don't know”.

He also reflects on the misguided belief in the American dream: “Backward foreign mind with no nationality believing that Uncle Sam walked on streets of solid gold...”

Ultimately, *Immigrant* urges us to find solace and dignity at home — in Mon Repos, in MOPO.

In *G.O.A.T.*, Dezral also pays tribute to his father and to **Pele**, asserting their place in Kaiso history: “The Kaiso GOAT: the greatest of all time, the monarch of all monarchs...”

This song invites us to reflect on how we honour cultural stewards like **Mighty Pep** and **Pele**. It's a call to embed their legacy in our educational and cultural institutions.

Dr Didacus Jules, in 1992, proposed a Folk Academy to teach Saint Lucia's indigenous intellectual traditions. He envisioned a course titled **Calyppo, Oral Tradition and**

**Social Commentary**, exploring Kaiso's evolution and its role in shaping public consciousness.

Such a curriculum would be incomplete without recognising **Mighty Pep's** contributions to calypso and its power as social commentary.

To Dezral: there's been chatter around your three-peat victory; questions of fairness and legitimacy. But as I wrote after your first win, don't see this as “fight down”. As Dr Tennyson Joseph notes, culture is a site of resistance. Our national events have become spaces for dispute, reflecting the public's disempowerment in formal institutions. While rulers act with impunity, the cultural arts, especially calypso, remain a platform for popular expression and indignation.

That doesn't mean the criticisms are justified. In this democratic space, you've been declared the winner. And many, across many quarters, celebrate your victory.

Because you are the GOAT.

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