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Man Talk, Masculinity, and a Changing Social Environment

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Abstract

Masculinity has been under the academic microscope for some time now, and especially so in the Caribbean. The urgency of the need to examine the phenomenon is a result of not only feminist activism and the changing role of women globally, but also the dramatic social, economic and technological shifts occurring across the globe, and indeed the globalization of ideologies, attitudes and beliefs. In the region, discourse on the issue has reached the level of governments and CARICOM as societies grapple with seismic shudders in the world order, and patriarchy finds the ground moving beneath its feet.

This paper reflects on how Caribbean men have traditionally communicated with each other, directly and indirectly, and how the internal debate among themselves must take cognisance of women's rights to be treated equally before the law, in the workplace, and in the home. It notes the results of decades of feminist discourse and activism in the region, but sounds a warning that the increased participation of girls in the education system has not necessarily led to higher rates of employment for them. The author warns that these gains by women should not be sacrificed or begrudged because boys and young men are perceived as being marginalized, but that a new socialization of males must take place, one that gives them a reviewed sense of purpose and identity as men.

In grasping the full range of pressures and influences on Caribbean men's conception of what masculinity means in the region today, the author highlights issues of job insecurity, heterosexual male violence against women and homosexuals, and between men, as well as the need for sexual harassment legislation.
