



Issue 1 - April

2007

Dancehalls, Masquerades, Body Protest and the Law: The Female Body as a Redemptive Tool Against Trinidad and Tobago's Gender-Biased Laws¹

Michèle Alexandre

Abstract

The female body has long been the subject of awe, shame and controversy. 'Sexual profiling' in all cultures, cast assumptions about women who use their bodies to express themselves. Social stereotypes regarding 'morality' are generally used to evaluate women's behaviours and justify sexual profiling. An analysis of the effects of sexual profiling on female bodily expression reveals that laws and social constructs conspire to restrict women's autonomy and freedom of expression, and has even impacted on feminist jurisprudence's view of female bodily expression. This impact is evidenced by the fact that, thus far, feminist jurisprudence has neglected to embrace the female body as a tool for redemption and liberation. Such an omission, however, has not derailed female bodily expression. In all cultures, there are women who use their bodies to fight patriarchy and resist gender-biased laws and assumptions. Comparing and contrasting U.S. based concerns with those of Trinidad and Tobago, this article argues that feminist jurisprudence must identify women's bodies as tools for redemption against sexual profiling, sexism and patriarchy.

¹ A version of this article was originally published with the Duke Gender Journal of Law and Policy.

