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“Neither Lend Out Your Hole To Achieve Piece of Gold” — Child Abuse, Bling Addiction and Soca Music in Trinidad and Tobago

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Abstract

The above title’s lyrical excerpt is taken from Trinidadian soca artist Bunji Garlin’s 2003 song “Dignity”, in which he addresses youth who are engaging in prostitution and transactional sexⁱ. In the song, Garlin chastises those who participate in such acts, while celebrating those who abstain by maintaining their “dignity”:

You know life is like a car and dignity is the clutch
 And some people love automatic and don’t want to clutch too much
 You know they have no dignity no integrity no purity they have no kind of sanity
 Jeezanages all they dealing with is profanity
 Hand up so!
 If yuh never sell yuh body just to make some money hands up lemme see
 Hand up so!
 Tru you never sell out your soul neither lend out your hole to achieve piece of
 gold
 hand up so!
 Tru you keep your dignity your pride and integrity well hands up lemme see

hand up so! (2003b)

The Caribbean has a long history of the sexualization and commodification of bodies, from the exploitation, enslavement, brutalization, fear of, and fascination with, Indigenous people by the Spanish, through the centuries of brutality enacted on African, Asian and mixed race bodies by the colonizers during the eras of slavery and indentureship, onto the present day where we find increases in the levels of tourism (including sex tourism), sexual violence and alarming rates of HIV infection (Kempadoo 2004; Sheller 2003; UNAIDS 2006). Research which addresses these themes, historical or contemporary, has focused almost exclusively on the adult body and psyche. Studies specifically of Caribbean sexualityⁱⁱ have also been focused on adults; much less is known about the sexuality of Caribbean youth, including issues of sexual abuse as it relates to both adolescents and children. This paper examines the linkages between increasing levels of violence and abuse against children/youth in the twin-island nation of Trinidad and Tobago, the detrimental aftereffects of such abuse on survivors (anger, shame, dissociation, low self-esteem, depression, addiction, substance abuse, disconnection from self-care, prostitution, violent and non-violent criminal behaviour) (Caputi 2003; Ray 2001; Medrano et al 2003; Campbell et al 2003; Gore-Felton et al 2006; Parsons et al 2005) and posits that a history of childhood sexual abuse in particular may be linked to addictive behaviours, and the propensity for engaging in prostitution and/or transactional sex in order to feed these addictions.
