



UWI

IGDS
INSTITUTE FOR GENDER &
DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

LUNCHTIME SEMINARS WEDNESDAYS – 12 NOON



Brendan Jamal Thornton is an anthropologist and assistant professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He received his Ph.D. in anthropology from the University of California, San Diego in 2011. His ongoing ethnographic research in the Caribbean is concerned with the social and cultural politics of belief and the role religious identity plays in impoverished urban communities. He is the author of *Negotiating Respect: Pentecostalism, Masculinity, and the Politics of Spiritual Authority in the Dominican Republic* (University Press of Florida 2016).

You are invited to the
IGDS, St. Augustine Unit Lunchtime Seminar

Victims of Illicit Desire: Pentecostal Men of God and the Specter of Sexual Temptation

with

Brendan Jamal Thornton

Assist. Prof. of Religious Studies,
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Wednesday, April 5, 2017 | 12 Noon

IGDS Seminar Room, The UWI, St. Augustine Campus

For men in the context of urban poverty in the Dominican Republic, Pentecostal conversion creates conditions of gender distress. As Christian converts, former men-of-the-streets are no longer permitted to carry out many of the familiar practices that once affirmed their barrio masculinity. Perhaps the most challenging proscription for these men to overcome is the one imposed on premarital sex and the freedom to act on sexual desires. The resulting feelings of anguish are expressed in the resentment converts foster with their spouses, the blame they assign to women for their struggles, and, most notably, the menace of nocturnal she-demon attacks that purportedly threaten to lead them astray. Drawing on ethnographic research conducted with members of a Pentecostal community in the town of Villa Altigracia, I discuss how many young men in the barrio come to experience the initial trials of conversion as tormenting spiritual assaults on their manhood in the form of alluring succubi. At the same time male converts adopt newly inspired antagonisms with women familiars whom they blame for their illicit desires. Elsewhere I have discussed the strategies Pentecostal men deploy in order to mediate the conflict between barrio masculinity and evangelical Christianity; here I am concerned with illustrating how this implicit conflict is given personal and cultural expression and how the attending experience of gender distress and its symbolic elaboration shapes masculine identity and male subjectivity in the church and local faith communities.

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