



Caribbean Review of Gender Studies

Issue 15 Disability, Mental Health, and Disablement

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Steve Ouditt

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"Proceed to Mental Health"

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CRGS Issue 15

Disability, Mental Health, and Disablement

About

We are honoured to present this issue on disability, mental health, and disablement for the Caribbean Review of Gender Studies. The thematic focus of this issue was borne out of numerous conversations and a shared interest in engaging with ongoing discussions about the intersections of gender, disability, and mental health in the Caribbean and Diaspora.

We remain deeply inspired by the words of Audre Lorde, whose lessons from her seminal text, *A Burst of Light and Other Essays*, continue to resonate: "Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare" (Lorde 1988, 130). Forever a visionary, by linking care to her survival, Lorde reminds us that participating in liberatory work necessitates a prioritization of our wellness and well-being. We have seen other Black and Caribbean feminists make similar assertions: Angela Davis (2016) says, "Self-care and healing and attention to the body and the spiritual dimension – all of this is now a part of radical social justice struggles." And Llana James (2007), who writes: "Feminist activism and theorizing within the African Diaspora [...] must include discussions about our physical and psychic well-being in order to truly generate strategies for surviving and thriving" (229). Grounded by these reminders, this issue is offered as a contribution to our collective care, and we hope it will be utilized as a mechanism for survival and our eventual liberation.

Justice and liberation are particularly urgent themes in this issue due to its thematic focus. In the region and across Caribbean communities in the Diaspora there is increased discourse about mental health and disability, but policies and protections for people with these lived realities and challenges have been slower to materialize. Accessibility remains a major barrier across the Caribbean, and this prevents people living with disabilities from equally participating in society. We also know that stigma and discrimination worldwide continue to marginalize those who live with mental illness (Jackson-Best and Edwards 2018). We often see discourse and talk prelude action from our states and governments; however, in the wait time between political promises and action, we experience the impacts of adverse health outcomes and lives lost as a consequence of this delay. As proponents for gender justice, it is essential to remember that the pressure we apply to our governments to advance the rights of women and LGBTQIA groups must also include advocacy for the rights and recognition of people living with mental health challenges and disabilities, and that oftentimes these identities overlap in unexpected ways.

The contributions in this issue mirror the many ways mental health, disability, and disablement are spoken about, worked through, and actioned on in our communities. The papers, commentaries and reviews hone in on the academic work that has been generated on these major themes. The contributions to the Gender Dialogues section provide arts-based approaches that explore these topics.

Read more: <https://sta.uwi.edu/crgs/index.asp>

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