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No Money No Love: Representations of the Social Impact of Poverty in Media, Popular and Literary Discourse

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Abstract

Within a global scenario that increasingly measures the worth and accomplishment of human persons, communities and nations in material terms, Caribbean societies continue to grapple with legacies of entrenched poverty and its intergenerational transmission. The challenge remains of transcending a brutal history of enforced and unjust labour systems, racialized inequities, multiple diasporas, structural adjustment and globalizing impulses. Moreover, traditional avenues of poverty alleviation and upward mobility, including education leading to professional careers, which undergirded the birthing of the new nations of the archipelago, are today proving increasingly distant or even unattainable for a widening cross-section of youths.

This paper explores extracts of literary, popular and media discourses for insights into the far-reaching social consequences of poverty, its intergenerational impact and prospects for alleviation. It examines poverty's differential impact as dependent on the age, gender and social locations of its victim. The paper zeroes in on the entrenchment and institutionalization of poverty and its impact on intimate and familial relations. It also identifies the points at which Caribbean discourses, in the process of defining a place and a way to be human, are working towards more affirmative measures of the worth of persons and societies.