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Bajan Queens, Nebulous Scenes: Sexual Diversity in Barbados

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Abstract

This article has three objectives: 1) to provide a brief and partial overview of the complex socio-sexual terrain of Barbados, primarily from the perspective of Barbadian (Bajan) “queens” (effeminate homosexual men, some of whom dress and act like women), such documentation being necessary given the paucity of social science research that currently exists on same-gender sexuality in the Caribbean; 2) to analyze how and why a particular sexual subject position—the queen—appears to occupy a marginally acceptable and relatively visible position in Bajan public culture while normatively gendered “gay”-identified individuals are denigrated and absent in this domain; and 3) to analyze how and why Bajan sexual subjects like “gays” and “queens” do not mirror Euro-American sexual subjectivities and their relationships to hegemonic socio-sexual values. Particularly relevant in the Bajan sexscape are racialized intersections of gender and class structured through discourses of respect and reputation.