

## DECONSTRUCTING THE 'DANCE HALL SPACE' IN JAMAICA

PAUL ANDREW BOURNE<sup>\*</sup>, S SCOTT<sup>\*\*</sup>, STEVE LAWRENCE<sup>\*</sup>, DAVE HIGGINS<sup>\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

Dance Hall, like the famous Jamaican reggae music, emerged out of the bowels of poor inner-city people wanting to tell their story. The proverbial socialization and identity need found in all human populations and culture, the need for the catharsis, the need to be heard, the quest to have the ears and attention of a neglectful society served as the scaffold from which jettisoned this emergence. For black lower classes, glossed as downtown people, the dancehall represents a symbol of pride in the ghetto; a source for black identity and expression, and the awakening of our roots in African culture. One such deviation occurs when women and men are erotically oriented to members of the same sex. A man who acts upon this erotic orientation violates a tenet of masculinity and most importantly appears to reject standards by which 'real men' are defined as selves and as subjects. Within a heterosexist culture like Jamaica, what is not masculine is feminine. Unable to cross freely between spheres, gender traitors are deemed to be homosexuals despite where their biological or sexual orientation may lie. A man who acts too effeminate is then regarded as a 'maama man' (feminine or effeminate man), and a woman who acts too masculine is termed as being 'butch' or as being 'man royal'. One of the most notorious homophobic songs ever produced in dancehall history is perhaps "Boom-bye-bye" by Buju Banton. Saunders posits that upon its release, the song received substantial air play on the radio and in the dance clubs however, when news of its content hit the air waves, the song was immediately banned for its homophobic lyrics. In addition, the song nearly cost Banton his international career and resulted in the sudden demise of DJ Shabba Ranks's career after he supported and reiterated these sentiments in an international interview. The 'Dance Hall Space' is a social institution that expresses Jamaicans resistance to sexual exploitation, particularly the sodomization of Black slaves, and goes to the root of their allowed dissention with Europeans supremacy.

**KEYWORDS:** Dance Hall Culture, Dance Hall Music, Deconstructions, Jamaica.

### INTRODUCTION

Dance Hall, like reggae, emerged out of the bowels of poor inner-city people wanting to tell

their story. The proverbial socialization and identity need found in all human populations and

---

<sup>\*</sup>Northern Caribbean University, Mandeville, Jamaica.

<sup>\*\*</sup>The University of the West Indies, Mona, Jamaica.

**Correspondence E-mail Id:** editor@eurekajournals.com

culture, the need for the catharsis, the need to be heard, the quest to have the ears and attention of a neglectful society served as the scaffold from which jettisoned this emergence. At the most rudimentary level the social construction of the dance hall reflects the life, structure, marginalization, victimization, vulnerability, and social exclusion of a people that dates back to pre-independence Jamaica. In pre-independence Jamaica, Kingston is imbued to the untamed core with the poverty, marginalization, vulnerability and the resilience of the poor slaves. The early settlers in Kingston were primarily poor and free slaves, and while the establishment of dwellings therein was in response to the economics at the time, criminal activities were committed only by a small percentage of the populace (Simmonds 2004). The pull factors to criminal activities were economic hardship, perceived betterment from the alternative investment schemes, and the low probability of being incarcerated (Becker, 1968). The economic marginalization of the peasants, income misdistribution, social exclusions, and economic progress of the bourgeoisie (planters) class during slavery, provide a justification for social deviances (Besson, 1995; Gordon, 1987; Stone, 1987, 1988; Beckford, 1972). Criminality, being an economic phenomenon (Becker, 1968; Francis, et al, 2001), provides a justification for the development and expansion of criminal networks operating from different geographic locality in order to carry out their activities of organised criminality (see Harriott, 2008). Reggae in its earlier embryonic form emerged as a voice of inner-city men who were expressing the morbid realities of the socio-political marginalization that had engulfed many lives in Kingston. The reggae artistes were not the formally educated ones of the populace; but they penned their frustrations with the social structure and navigated their plights as well as those of their fellow neighbours in words that they knew, and much of the constructions were geared towards highlighting an oppressive state of affairs in the society, especially among those in

inner-city communities. Simmonds (2004) argues that,

At best it can be concluded that the pressures and stresses of living in an urban slave society were occasionally turned inwards, and were not aimed only at whites in the form of actions which may be defined strictly as slave resistance (p. 10) The pressure of urban living is documented by Simmonds; but these are expressed by reggae and dance hall artistes more graphically and vividly than Simmonds. Bob Marley is among the many reggae artistes to describe the travails of inner-city people in his songs. In this paper, the authors will examine the social constructions of Dance Hall artistes and how these cultural expressions are misunderstood by the outside cultures. Even contemporary dance hall artistes like Baby Cham, Buju Banton, and Bunty Killa penned the frustrations, oppressive nature of the society, the division and injustices between the poor and the affluent, and other social ills in the society; but the language and expression which are reflections of the education level of these men are misunderstood because of the experiences they undergo and see. Many dance hall and reggae artistes are the voices of the inner-city peoples wanting to be heard and desirous of being a part of mainstream culture and media. These artistes' social constructions germinate and emanate inside of the lived experiences of poor urban inner-city communities and do not reflect the prestigious lifestyles and affluence of educated and predominantly articulate upper classes.

## **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS AND DANCE HALL IDIOMS: MEANING, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE**

For black lower classes, glossed as downtown, the dancehall is a symbol of pride in the ghetto, in black identity, and of African culture (Stolzoff, 2000). According to Stewart (2002), dancehall is more than the actual event but is a cultural music

or dance stage where actors reveal, perform, and reinforce the cultural necessities and complexities of their lives. As Noel (1993) points out, dancehall represents the unofficial cultural codes of conduct, both lyrically and literally. Some of the most significant cultural codes that the dancehall embodies and projects are those that pertain to sexuality in general and male sexuality in particular. Cooper (2004) maintains that in the Jamaican popular culture, sexuality, like language, is a domain in which a political struggle for the control of social space is articulated. Based on their historical experience, many Jamaican men identify and negotiate their masculine identity status through their sexuality and seeming dominance of and power over the other, that in these instances, women (Hope 2006). Homophobia can be therefore perceived as an effort to maintain and reproduce strict categories of gender in which women are the inferiors in the male/female pair. This cultural dialogue in the dancehall is grounded in an ideological stance that draws significantly on this gendered foundation which is then married to other religious, moral, and cultural imperatives in Jamaica and the region.

The gender makeup of the Jamaican population (more women than men) and the setup of most Jamaican families (women as breadwinners) points to a possible matriarchal society. Although this may be so, it can be posited that men continue to manipulate a larger portion of authority, especially sexual authority, making the society very much a patriarchal one when viewed from that vista. As such, within the dancehall sphere, an area that Jamaican culture is greatly highlighted, male heterosexuality and polygamy are revered and treasured because they embody the productive core of the masculine identity. The dancehall culture, as a result, constantly reasserts gender norms for fear of deviations (Alturi, 2001). One such deviation occurs when women and men are erotically oriented to members of the same sex. A man who acts upon

this erotic orientation violates a tenet of masculinity and most importantly appears to reject standards by which 'real men' are defined as selves and as subjects.

Within a heterosexist culture like Jamaica, what is not masculine is feminine. Unable to cross freely between spheres, gender traitors are deemed to be homosexuals despite where their biological or sexual orientation may lie. A man who acts too feminine is then regarded as a 'maama man' (feminine or effeminate man), a woman who acts too masculine is termed as being 'butch' or as being 'man royal'.

Though more acceptable than homosexuality, oral sex especially cunnilingus (men on women) exists as a violation or challenge to masculinity in the dancehall culture and to a greater extent, Jamaican culture. The fact is that sexual taboos exists pervasively in the entire Jamaican society, but popular culture however that forms the environment of dancehall and reggae seems to be some of the only concrete cultural discourses in which attitudes toward homosexuality and oral sex are expressed outright. Like Stewart, Jahn et al (1998) maintains that dancehall is but a reflection of all social institutions of the society. Instead of perpetuating new images and thoughts it merely reflects or highlights what is already present. As such, the general dislike that dancehall perpetuates against homosexuals and oral sex participants are not a completely new occurrence but are present in the wide Jamaican society (Alturi, 2001). As a result, while dancehall and reggae lyrics have come under attack for their crude portrayal of sexual politics, and while they may be explicitly prejudiced, they do what respectable silences do not; they start the conversation.

From nuh gal kyaan call yuh furniture face

Not dis mout, not dis face

-“Not dis face”- Cobra

Nuh gal kyaan siddung pan mi head

If a gal try dat she dead  
She affi run the cocky red! red! red! red!  
-“Nuh Gal”- Beenie Man  
What a nastiness like wi betta change the  
national dish to  
Jackie and Saltfish  
Nuff man kyaan get nuh gal if dem nuh eat  
Nuff a dem kyaan seh nuttin caah dem a dweet  
Maria a tell mi a she gi him the treat  
-“Cyan Get Nuh Gal”- Spragga Benz

The above excerpts are but a few songs that exist in the Dancehall that denounces the activity of oral sex or ‘bowing’ in Jamaica. According to Hope (2006) the term “bow” signifies the low status assigned to the concept where one must stoop down low to show deference or respect for a higher authority figure in accepting one’s own subservience and subjugation. The “bow cat”, ‘bowas’, ‘licky back’, ‘eater-man’ ‘stiff tongue’ or ‘tongue gad’ by extension, is that man or woman who chooses to participate in the act of oral sex. The practice of oral sex has received a heavy beating from Jamaican Dancehall artistes because it was never a dominant part of the discourse of sexual activity in Jamaican society. Though there has not been any specific biblical citing against the act as there is for homosexuality, Jamaicans or more specifically, Jamaican men in the dancehall culture always disregarded the practice as nasty, slack, and degrading. As such, when the female artiste Cecile released and made a video for her 2003 single “Give it to me baby” promoting cunnilingus, she was met with a great degree of resistance.

In the song, Cecile discussed and supported the practice of bowing as she explained that “nuff a dem a singbout a slackness that... bout dem nah bow but mek wi watch a dem pan video unda the frock” (a lot of them-men are singing that bowing is slackness however we should watch as these

are the same men who are seen on tape under ladies dresses). She continues that she as well as the majority of females who have had the opportunity to receive oral sex “love d man dem weh dweet” (loves the men who does it). Needless to say, the song provoked anger amongst male DJ’s and other males in the dancehall culture who felt that Cecile was ‘too outa oda’ or in other words too disrespectful. Interestingly, the song not only met resistance from men but also from some women living in the inner city communities. The fact is that many of these women have no problem with the act, or their partners performing it, as long as it is kept private. Participants in oral sex activities, especially those who are a part of the dancehall culture, work off the premise of a very old yet insightful Jamaican proverb “Is not everything good fi eat, good fi talk” (It is not everything that is good to eat is good to talk). This leads to the proposition by Stewart (2007) that dancehall keeps a lot in private particularly those sexual activities that hold strong taboos in Jamaica.

Aside from Cecile’s, the majority of Dancehall songs that deal with oral sex suggest there is a discourse of shame and emasculation associated with a man attempting to sexually satisfy his woman through oral sex. Saunders (2003) asserts that Spraggas’ charge that we should change the national dish from ackee and salt fish to Jackie and salt fish suggests that women are now becoming a culinary treat for some men in Jamaica. This, according to many male participants in the dancehall culture, is a sure sign of a man’s lack of ambition and sexual capabilities. In other words, men who perform oral sex do so because they cannot handle the ‘wuk’ (sexual encounter) or are incapable of handling the amount of ‘wuk’ put before them (Saunders 2003). The general sentiment of most men in the dancehall culture is “Dem kyaan beat it up so dem eat it up” (they cannot beat it up, that is provide gratification through traditional

sex – penis into vagina- so they have to eat it up- use their mouth to provide sexual gratification).

Traditionally both fellatio (women on men oral sex) and cunnilingus were negated in the dancehall treatise (Hope 2006). According to Noel (1993), in the case of fellatio, dancehall participants state “No Ice Cream sound” and as for cunnilingus ‘How man fi live inna ooman ole like a crab?’ (How can a man live in a woman’s vagina like a crab lives in a hole). However, evidence acquired from songs and interviews, suggests men in the lower stratum of society no longer frown on oral sex in its entirety. The practice of fellatio is now receiving a significant amount of acceptance in dancehall. This can be seen in a number of songs like ‘Boom’ by Baby Cham who suggests that his “yeye dem tun ova wen him gal a clean” (eyes roll over when his girlfriend performs oral sex) and Vybez Kartel’s “Wine Pan You” where he states “gal yuh nuh wrong wen u nyam off the john just tell a gal u is u own big ooman” (Girl you are not wrong when u perform oral sex just let it be known that you are an adult with the freedom to do whatever you wish). These dancehall artistes express the sentiment that it is ok when the woman is the one who goes down or ‘bows’ on her partner however they still see an atrocity if the men decide to ‘go down’ on the women. Hope suggests that the practice is acceptable because men are at the receiving end and as such remain the dominant actor in his sexual conquests. She points out however, that nowhere in dancehall discourse has there been any intentional treatise by a male artiste that encourages or supports cunnilingus. This is as “bowing” for a man indicates a relinquishment of not only sexual power over the woman but also the power given to him by society and social culture.

Social Scientists, specifically Cultural Materialists like Saunders suggest that perhaps another underlying reason for such disdain and uproar against oral sex is because it is an unproductive activity

that serves not God, or man, or country. Men who “suck off gal toes” or “stretch the tongue” (the vaginal clit) are cast into a realm of sexual uncertainty. Saunders goes further to state that in the dancehall culture men who “bow” have no potential to be sexually reproductive as “mout wata kyaan bring son or dawta” (mouth water cannot produce sons or daughters). Moreover, their status as Jamaican citizens is called into question due to their sexual appetites.

Well I kyaan believe a ow’ batty man get so bold  
Mi kyaan believe seh Rasta man a tun pussy ole’  
Mi kyaan believe some name mi hear seh a men (gays)

Mi kyaan believe seh tight pants come in again

Mi kyaan believe seh gun man and batty man a fren

Mi kyaan she batty man a run people place

Mi kyaan believe d shatta dem a bleach out dem face

Mi Neva know Jamaica woulda have so much gay  
“Can’t believe mi eyes”- Bounti Killa and Baby Cham

Stolzoff maintains that though much has changed in the dancehall, the power relations between men and women and the basic notions of what constitute ‘normal’ sexuality have not changed much. Jamaica remains from the days of slavery, a predominantly homophobic country where acts of a sexual nature between persons of the same sex are largely forbidden. Atluri (2001) maintains that homophobia in its widely politicized context refers to “physical and emotional violence and juridical abuse against gay men and women”.

The sexual intolerance of Jamaican people has its roots in the “Christianization of Jamaican slavery”. Indeed, even when they are not practising Christians, persons of the dancehall culture and the wider Jamaican culture claim the strong fundamentalist Christian religious

imperatives that underpin Jamaica as one important element in the constitution of their discomfort with male homosexuality (Hope 2006). This includes the use of biblical scriptures and quotations that condemn homosexuality. There is a constant evocation of the story of

Sodom and Gomorrah and the directive given to man by God in the creation story in Genesis "Be fruitful and multiply". All these biblical instances are used by the Jamaican man as guidelines to the appropriate way to conduct life and sexuality so as to ensure supernatural approval.



**Figure 1.**Member of the International Group Outrage Protests



**Figure 2.**Jamaican Dancehall Artist Elephant Man

Hope writes that in the dancehall, the use of sex and sexuality to reinforce and identify masculine identity is reflected in an overt paranoia of male homosexuality and all that it symbolizes. The "batty bwoy", "chi-chi man", "faggot", "fish", or "queer" (all terms used to identify the male homosexual in Jamaica) more so than the "bow cat" is at the forefront of sexual deviants in the Jamaican dancehall culture. The fact is that dancehall culture identifies with and promotes the values of heterosexism which can basically be defined a political situation in which heterosexuality is seen to be natural, moral, and superior (Alturi 2001). Heterosexism and Homophobia exists hand in hand. Homophobia seeks to punish and correct sexual deviation while reinforcing the superiority of the heterosexual. She further states that in a

heterosexual culture, like that which exists in the Dancehall in particular and wider Jamaica in general, heterosexuals are accorded the principles and privileges that grant to them political power, sexual freedom, and juridical non-interference, to name but a few. In this heterosexist culture, men are strong and women weak. They appear gendered as two halves of a whole, with man being the actor and woman the acted upon (Alturi 2001). In reinterpreting homosexuality in the dancehall, it can be argued that one is not gay if he is the actor and not the acted upon. According to Hutton (1999) this is reinforced in a popular saying or aphorism among Jamaican men "if any wood a push a mi a push it". That is to say if any sexual intercourse is to take place, be it with woman, man or beast, the 'real' 'masculine' man will be the active partner.

As such it becomes clear that homosexuality challenges masculinity in the dancehall as one of the male has to be on the receiving end for the act to take place at all.

It must be noted however that the resistance that meets homosexuality in the dancehall stems from the fact that it represents a foreign, white, and unnatural corruption of true black values and identities. Noble (2000) maintains that initially the term gay denoted white men with large discretionary incomes and evasive lifestyles. The homosexual was seen as the white man's problem and homosexuality as the white man's disease. Many would postulate that though buggery has been and continues to be illegal in Jamaica, tourism, the islands main industry and source of foreign currency, introduced homosexuality as an open activity as gay visitors frolicked without the fear of the police or any real physical intimidation by the public. Recently there has been an unprecedented rise in the number and visibility of homosexuals and incidence of homosexual activities in the Jamaican society. Hope attributes this rise to "the direct result of the progressive unmasking of (male) homosexuality since the late 1990's". She maintains that this is visible in the number of openly homosexual men that are featured during prime time cable television that is directly accessible to the Jamaican population. With the support of Cooper (2004), Hope maintains that homophobia in the Jamaican society was further heightened with the launch of the Jamaica Federation for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gay (JFLAG) in December of 1998. To make matters worse, ambitious reporters like our very own Ian Boyne, proceeded to show his openness and his disdain for Jamaican gay-bashers by conducting televised interviews with openly homosexual men advocating their 'right' to lead the life of their choice. One of the most memorable yet unfortunate (in that he is now deceased) homosexual visitors to Jamaican television was Brian Williamson. Williamson met with an

untimely death, which though speculated to be the cause of robbery, was met with great approval by Jamaican homophobes.

The dancehall, as inner city culture and Jamaican popular culture, actively and consistently articulates, represents, and performs its own version of this masculinized discourse in the form of anti-homosexual treatise (Hope). The level of homophobia that exists in Jamaican society and specifically in the actual dancehall event is exemplified in statements that the selectors would say like "all who hate batty man gun finga inna d air" (all who hate homosexuals show the hand symbol of a gun) or "mek mi see you lighter if you love pussy" (let me see your lighters if you love vagina). In addition, the rise in the visibility of homosexuals has been met with a rise in anti-homosexual lyrics on the dancehall scene. Many of the recent dancehall songs (Stolzoff, 2000) written by male artistes and singers show not only disdain for but aims violence towards homosexuals and homosexual activities. Note, homosexual activities in Jamaican dancehall culture include anal sex with the female. Noble maintains that the disavowal of male anal eroticism is a recurring theme in many dancehall lyrics in frequent warning to young men not to bend down. Simultaneously, the attention lavished upon the female buttocks never goes so far as to imply heterosexual anal penetration. In fact, in one of his very liberal singles, DJ Vybez Kartel recently echoed the sentiment that the man who becomes interested in anal penetration with the female is worse off than the homosexual "missa man yuh wossa dan the batty man" as he unlike the homosexual is close to the vagina which should be of a greater appeal.

Boom bye-bye inna batty bwoy head

Rude bwoy nuh promote nuh nasty bwoy dem affi dead

-“Boom-bye-bye”-Buju Banton

One of the most notorious homophobic songs ever produced in dancehall history is perhaps "Boom-bye-bye" by Buju Banton. Saunders posits that upon its release, the song received substantial air play on the radio and in the dance clubs however, when news of its content hit the air waves, the song was immediately banned for its homophobic lyrics. In addition, the song nearly cost Banton his international career and resulted in the sudden demise of DJ Shabba Ranks's career after he supported and reiterated these sentiments in an international interview. However, it is important to point out that despite the attempts by local groups such as JFLAG and Amnesty International, anti-homosexual lyrics continue to be produced in the Jamaican dancehall industry. Popular artistes like Beenie man, Buju Banton, Bounti Killa, Vybz Kartel, T.O.K and Elephant man are but a few of the artistes that continue to produce lyrics of this nature. One may be curious enough to ask why this is so? The truth is, as previously mentioned, that homophobia expressed by Jamaican artistes are but a reflection of the wider society. The fact that Jamaican artistes continue to receive the support of the local dancehall audience speaks to the possibility that these persons share the same view. According to Noble (2000), such heterosexual and homophobic lyrics and support for it, points to an insecurity about the capacity of black masculinity to secure its dominance. In announcing that stated disavowal of male homosexuality, many dancehall lyrics posit gay identity as a kind of false feminism that aims to cheat both the heterosexual men and women of their respective powers. Many songs, Noble continues, allude to the dangers in misrecognizing a gay man as a woman "tru mi kno a maama man run the world, mi coulda find out mi girl name Earl" (because homosexuals have now taken over the world I could very well find out that my woman is actually a homosexual man in disguise) or of gay men seeking to occupy that space reserved for women without phallogocentric desire, a desire that always requires

an object for male penetration. According to Hope, dancehall songs of the 'chi-chi man' genre are rife with narratives in which male homosexuals are "stereotyped, labelled, nicknamed, disrespected, burnt, stabbed, beaten and run out of town, shot and killed in a variety of creative and excruciating fashions".

To further explain the meaning of homophobia in the dancehall, Hope asserts that in the sociocultural context of dancehall, to be gendered female is to be dominated and powerless. As such, if a man engages in sexual activities with another man he becomes feminized and thereby loses masculine dominance and power that is necessary for his survival. Further, she continues, to condone male homosexuality is to reveal an ideological overview that legitimizes and supports the feminizing and subsequent loss of power of men. However, to publicly take a violent, anti-homosexual stance is to express one's accord for masculinity, male sexuality, and male dominance even when this individual has no real intent or history of physical assault against gay men. To this Saunders adds that the evocation of the "batty man" demarcates social, political, and cultural violation because homosexuality violates patriarchy, masculinity, the patriarchal state, and surely its ability to reproduce itself and its discourses of belonging and national identity. Consequently, the behaviours, practices, and sexual preferences of homosexual men in Jamaica, asserts Hope, shatters the accepted notion of self that underpin the lives of heterosexual men in this patriarchal society. Smith (Abelove et al 1993) maintains that people are generally threatened about issues of sexuality. For some, the mere existence of homosexuals calls their sexuality or heterosexuality into question. Homosexuality is, in essence, viewed as a threat to manhood and all that it represents such as power, prestige, and livelihood. Cultural Materialist states that if the wealth of the nation depends on the productivity



of the citizens then we must understand socially sanctioned methods like the 'seeding' of women (impregnation of women).

Crucial to this paper and the evaluation of Masculinity is the general Jamaican take on female homosexuality. In truth, lesbians in Jamaica are also given derogatory names like 'dyke', 'sodomite' (from the word sodomy) and 'man-royal,' however, because of the degree of inequality in value of the female and male in the patriarchal society of Jamaica, female homosexuals are not seen as posing any, no real threat or challenge to hard core masculinity in the Jamaican dancehall culture. While citing Chevannes (1994), Hope states that men in the inner city and in the dancehall space generally view lesbianism from a paternalistic manner. The overarching belief is that lesbianism is really pseudo-sex between or among women that is not only powerless but can easily be corrected or recanted when these women have sex with a 'real man'. Male homosexuality is viewed as the only real threat because it tampers with definitions of the masculine identity through sex and sexual identity where manhood has been traditionally defined as male domination over women.

Needless to say, there are no easy victories to be scored in the clash with heterosexism and homophobia of the type that the likes of Buju Banton are undoubtedly representing (Cooper 2004).

Indeed, Jamaican society is slowly but surely transforming itself in a less repressive place for homosexuals. Cloaked under a hypocritical kind of "respect", gays are basically allowed to "do their thing" in private but must be willing to accept ritualistic ridicule or culturally sanctioned abuse as part of their routine marginalization (Hope). A March 8, 1993 letter to the Daily Gleaner entitled "Right to Hold Opinion", exemplifies the contradictory public response to homosexuality:

"Homosexuals are, I believe, free to carry on their affairs as they see fit, so long as they keep it away from me. I find their sexual preference distasteful to say the least, but at the same time I do not advocate violence against them and prefer the 'live and let live' policy"

Despite this change, it is fair to state that the traditional beliefs and values are deep rooted in the Jamaican culture in general and the dancehall culture in particular. Jamaicans may be more willing to share a social space with homosexuals and oral sex participants however it remains common understanding that these issues must never enter the 'national arena' or at least not in any way that gives them any political legitimacy. Alturi states that any 'out' homosexual activity would upset the balance in which homosexuality is tolerated to the extent that it is invisible.

## **CONCLUSION**

The social constructions of Dance Hall artistes are an expression of the socio-economic and psychological realities of inner-city peoples. The language is filled with idiom, cultural underpinnings, and is over-coated with bitterness as a result of the marginalization experiences, witnessed and exclusion of the mainstream society and their worlds. Their world is small, oppressive, marginalized, exclusionary, vicious and unforgiving, while they read, hear, and see the other side of opportunities, power, luxury, glamour, peace, justice, and dignity experienced by the educated and affluent classes. The songs echoed by dance hall artistes are vehicle of frustration as well as a message of oppression that they seek redress.

The Jamaican state is sexed in heterosexist, hegemonic terms based on masculinity and femininity that subordinate women or female qualities and exclude and prosecute the homosexual. By examining the relationship between heterosexism and patriarchy, it is clear that homosexuality and oral sex challenges

masculinity and creates fragmentations in the male role that would lead to less male dominance. Both the 'batty man' and the 'bow cat' threaten the moral state of the heterosexual patriarchal family that exists in Jamaica and therefore their suppression is often integral to the maintenance of patriarchy.

The dance hall space is a social construction of lived realities; the vicious in language is again another expression of the culture in inner-city communities and call for equality among the marginalized group. The usage of the language reflects the lived experience, the call against injustice and indignity, the social exclusionary nature of the society and desire to be heard. Crucifying and incarcerating reggae artistes, especially dance hall artistes, are missing the injustices, social exclusionary society and marginalization that continue to occur in inner-city communities. Their voices are vehicles of the challenges experienced by many in the society that should be heard, remedied, and alleviated instead of circumventing the hidden messages of the language from the social constructions. Dance hall is a language like revivalism, and its proponents are not scholastic and wealthy; but it symbolizes an expression of oppression. The 'Dance Hall Space' is a social institution that expresses Jamaicans resistance to sexual exploitation, particularly the sodomization of Black slaves which goes to the root of their dissent with Europeans supremacy.

## REFERENCES

- [1]. Alturi, T. (2001). *When the closet is a region: Homophobia, Heterosexism and Nationalism in the Commonwealth Caribbean*. Centre for Gender and Development Studies: University of the West Indies Working Paper No.5.
- [2]. Becker, G.S. (1968). "Crime and punishment: An economic approach." *Journal of Political Economy*; 76:69-217.
- [3]. Beckford, G. (1972). *Persistent Poverty: Underdevelopment in Plantation Economies of the Third World.* London: Oxford University Press.
- [4]. Besson, J. The legacy of George L. Beckford's plantation economy thesis in Jamaica. *New West Indian Guide/ Nieuwe West-Indische Gids* 1995; 69, no: 1/2, Leiden, 111-119.
- [5]. Cooper, C. (2004). *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall at Large*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York.
- [6]. Figure 1. Members of Outrage Protest. Photo taken by John D. Mc Hugh. Retrieved on April 12, 2007 at <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/fridayreview/story/0,,1369875,00.html>.
- [7]. Figure 2. Dancehall Artiste Elephant Man. Photo taken by John D. Mc Hugh. Retrieved on April 12, 2007 at <http://arts.guardian.co.uk/fridayreview/story/0,,1369875,00.html>.
- [8]. Gordon, D. (1987). *Class, status and social mobility in Jamaica*. Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies, Mona.
- [9]. Harriott, A. (2003). Editor's overview. In *Understanding the crime in Jamaica: New challenges for public policy* by Anthony Harriott, ix-xx. Kingston: University of the West Indies Press.
- [10]. Harriott, A. (2004). Introduction. In: Harriott, A., Brathwaite, F. & Wortley, S., eds. (2004). *Crime and criminal justice in the Caribbean*. Kingston: Arawak Publication.
- [11]. Hope, D. (2006). *Inna di Dancehall: Popular Culture and Politics of Identity in Jamaica*. The University of the West Indies Press: Jamaica.
- [12]. Hutton, C. (1999). *The Gyalification of Man: The expression of Male Male Conflict in Jamaica and the Roots of Homoeroticism in the Political Ideology, Ontology and Praxis of White Supremacy*.

- [13]. Noble, D (2000). "Ragga Music: Dis/Respecting Black Women and Dis/Reputable Sexualities in Bonor Hesse, ed., *Un/ Settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglement, Transportations*. Zed Books: London, pg 148-169.
- [14]. Noel, P. (1993, January 12). Batty Boys in Babylon. *Village Voices xxxviii*.
- [15]. Saunders, P (2003, March 13). Is not Everything Good to Eat Good to Talk: Sexual Economy and Dancehall Music in the Global Marketplace. *Small Axe* Vol 7 NO. 1. Retrieved April 11, 2007 at [http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/small\\_axe/v007/7.1saunders.pdf](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/small_axe/v007/7.1saunders.pdf).
- [16]. Smith, B (1993). Homophobia: Why Bring it Up? in Abelove et al eds. *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. Routledge: New York
- [17]. Stewart, K ((2002, May 1) 'So Wha, Mi Nuh Fi Live To?': Interpreting Violence in Jamaica through the Dancehall Culture. *IDEAZ* Vol 1. NO.1.
- [18]. Stolzoff, N (2000). *Wake the Town and Tell the People: Dancehall Culture in Jamaica*. Duke University Press: Durham.
- [19]. Stone, C. (1987). Crime and violence: Socio-political implication. In Phillips P, Wedderburn J eds. *Crime and violence: Causes and solutions*. Kingston: Department of Government, the University of the West Indies.
- [20]. Stone, C. (1988). Crime and violence: socio political implications. In *Crime and Violence: Causes and Solutions* edited by P. Phillips and J. Wedderburn. Mona, Jamaica: Department of Government.