

HOMOPHOBIA IN THE CARIBBEAN: JAMAICA

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Various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have recently stated that the ex-English colonies of Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago are among the most homophobic places in the world. The authors explore the validity of these claims by discussing some of the explanations, theories and observations of these former colonies. While the authors will focus on the influence that Britain had in Jamaica, comparisons will also be made to other ex-Caribbean colonies. The second portion will examine the current homophobic climate through observations from those living in, as well as outside Jamaica. The third portion will be an introduction to the norms and rules regarding homosexuality emerging from plantation societies that began with English laws and culture. The fourth portion will

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discuss the cultural developments in the time between the abolition of slavery and Jamaica's independence. Explanations of what resulted after independence will also be explored. To provide a broader picture, there will be a discussion of the religious roots of homophobia and African pre-Christian social values to determine whether they present an ongoing barrier to change. The final section will survey the current laws with regard to same sex relationships between Caribbean men along with the enactment of laws against discriminatory treatment. The authors will conclude by observing the different ways in which the West's attitudes toward male homosexuality contrasts with Jamaica's with a question: are we engaging in "social colonialism" as many in the Caribbean maintain?