

In this issue WMW calls for the media, one of society's most powerful institutions, to take **ACTION** towards the **ELIMINATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE!**

SO ... WHATS THE MEDIA GOT TO DO WITH IT?

An exploration of the media's role in the perpetuation of gender-based violence

HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE DANCEHALL CHANNEL on Entertainment System's channel 103? From popular sound system Stone Love's anniversary party to Passa Passa, a weekly dance held in Tivoli Gardens, an inner-city community in Kingston, this channel takes you straight into the world of the hardcore, unadulterated dancehall scene. A typical hour of channel 103 consists of females flashing their vaginas and bearing their derrieres, while men vigorously grind and bounce them groin to groin, frequently flinging them to the ground and dropping their bodies between their legs. Violent sex is glorified as women twist their faces to symbolise the agony of rough intercourse.

It's not hard to understand how scenes like these may encourage rape and violence against women. Women are depicted as wanting violent sex and as subservient sexual objects, while men are portrayed as pain-inflicting dominators worthy of satisfying sexual desire at any cost.

Still, these same ideologies, which help to perpetuate sexual violence and violence against women, prevail in other less blatant forms of media.

The Role of the Advertiser

Many advertisers use women's bodies as tools to sell products and services. Canada's Media Watch (www.media-awareness.ca) describes the impact of using women's sexuality in ads, stating: "Women become sexual objects when their bodies and their sexuality are linked to products that are bought and sold." When women's bodies are commoditized and therefore dehumanized, it becomes easy

to use and abuse them.

Advertisers use women's bodies as a profit-making tool and proven sales tactic. Similarly, media content (the articles, features and programmes produced by the media



themselves) is often filled with material that equally trivializes women's sexuality, thereby leading to the promotion of violence against women.

Woman Talk

Superficial representations of women, sex and relationships prevail even in women's publications. These publications focus on how women must look and behave, sexually and otherwise, in order to please men. For example, on January 14, 2008, the Gleaner's

Flair magazine, a women's publication, published an article titled 'Playing with Fire'. The piece explained how, why and when women should flirt with men, illustrated through the experience of a female, self-proclaimed flirting expert. She noted, "... I flirt because I want to feel sexy, and getting the response that I want boosts my confidence."

Articles like these perpetuate the idea that women are objects for male satisfaction. In this piece the woman admits to feeling sexy when she has behaved pleasingly to a man and he reciprocates her advances. This reinforces an ideology of male superiority, and creates a culture where women and men believe women are made desirable only when they receive sexual advances from men. This belief in male dominance, when taken to extremes, will be exercised through violence. In this warped value system, which is propagated via the media, women and men view male abuse as standard, inherently male, behaviour.

Carmen Patterson, a former editor at the Gleaner who currently runs a local public relations firm, affirms that the local media is not always "sensitive to what it is reporting and how it affects peoples' lives."

Accountable News?

Indeed, the local news media is no less laden with common practices that perpetuate gender-based violence. The values and attitudes of reporters are often evident in news reports, despite the ideal of objectivity, reflecting and feeding a patriarchal ideology still prevalent in Jamaica. For instance, a

WHEN WE READ HEADLINES LIKE THE FOLLOWING, HOW DO YOU THINK IT INFLUENCES OUR PERCEPTION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Headlines taken from the Star November 2006-February 2008

No underage lover • **JEALOUS BRUTAL ATTACKS: WOMEN'S VAGINAS CHOPPED AND BURNT IN RECENT INCIDENTS** • **PERVERT STALKS STUDENTS** •

Students sell \$10 WINE Grade seven girls gyrating on boys for a fee • *Dad sniffs girl's crotch?* • **Man masturbating before trainee nurses** • **TEEN**

RAPED ALL DAY • *Cops party at strip clubs Uniformed officers, with guns, 'bruk out' with dancers* • **MORGUE WORKERS RAPING THE DEAD** • *140 Stabs but alive*

Woman survives alleged attack from ex-boyfriend • **HAVE SEX WITH MY WIFE: HUSBY PAYS A MAN TO SERVICE SPOUSE**

• **Child sexually molests mother 15 year old boy remanded for shocking, dirty acts** • *Dutty wine rape? eight year old girl loses virginity during 'dance'* •

8 years of Abuse? 14 year old girl molested since she was six • *Peeping Tom caught - Found lurking in womens bathroom* • **FAMILY RAM? COPS ARREST MAN FOR ALLEGEDLY ASSAULTING SISTER** • *Party thief stalks residents Pervert ejaculates in stolen underwear* • **SPOUSE BEATEN FOR SEX** •

Man kills wife and police recover body parts

• **Pimps in schools**

Boys operating

prostitution rings

COP MOLESTS STEPCHILD?

Charged after 7yo is carnally abused

• **Man kills wife and police recover body parts**

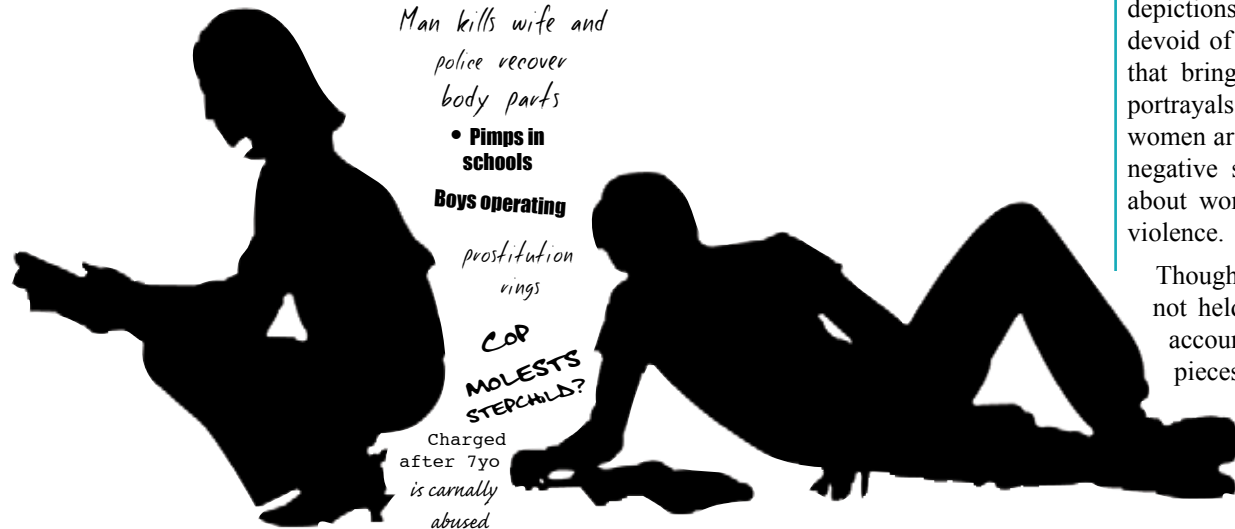
• **Pimps in schools**

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COP MOLESTS STEPCHILD?

Charged after 7yo is carnally abused



Tips for the media covering gender-based violence:

- Illustrate the warning signs of abuse.
- Remember source selection shapes a story
- Include information about resources
- Do not focus on victim's behaviour or use victim-blaming language
- Do not assume some cultures and classes are violent and others are not
- Find out what the relationship was between the perpetrator and the victim
- Pay attention to language
- Educate people about gender-based violence and why it happens
- Consider the safety of the person being interviewed
- Avoid sensationalism (i.e. blood/gore in domestic violence/sexual assault cases, prurient issues in trafficking/sexual harassment cases etc.)

news story on a report of rape may trivialize the matter by implying the female responsible for having caused the rape, or the reporter may unwarrantedly explore the possibility of the victim fabricating the story.

Similarly, when a young girl is reported as 'having had sexual relations' with a man, when in actuality, based on their ages, the man is raping the young girl, according to our laws. Reporters' use of words can make gender-based violence, and rape specifically, appear frivolous.

When the news media, particularly tabloids, continually drapes headlines of rape, abuse and molestation across its front page, with jargon that seeks to entertain, rather than alert and inform, the extreme devastation, psychological and physical degradation and long-term impacts of rape are not grasped by the public. Sensationalized depictions breed a society that is devoid of the poignant reactions that bring about change. Many portrayals of violence against women are laced with reinforced negative stereotypes and myths about women and gender-based violence.

Though opinion pieces are not held to the same level of accountability as are news pieces, media houses are still responsible for vetting them, as they can become unfortunate presentations of irresponsible public discourse.

Irresponsible Opinions

In the Jamaica Observer on April 15, 2005, Mark Wignall's opinion piece is an example of the reckless use of the mass media in transmitting careless notions of male and female sexuality, and more explicitly, rape.

Speaking of Rita Marley's public declaration that her late husband Bob Marley had raped her while the two were married, Wignall states, "Almost every

REPORTING ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In research conducted by Taitu Heron, member of WMW and Manager of the Social Development & Gender Unit at the Planning Institute of Jamaica, an analysis of the print media between September 2006 and August 2007 uncovered the following and much more . . .

- Much of the news was found to focus on a particular incident or set of allegations and uses very formulaic reporting. This reduces the complexity and trauma of the situation. Violence and abuse then become easy to overlook and considered trivial.
- Criminal reporting tends to be conducted via a passive voice that erases the abuser as an active agent and shifts the responsibility from the perpetrator to victim.
- Misleading and sensational titles are commonly used and trivialize the trauma.

EXAMPLES:

Dutty wine rape? (Jamaica Star, Nov 9, 2006)

No under age lover (Jamaica Star, June 14, 2007)

11 y-o boy given oral sex (Jamaica Star, Dec 21, 2006)

"SEXTRA" lessons (Jamaica Star July 11, 2007)

- There is common reference to sexual assault or carnal abuse at the onset of a report, then the language changes and the incident is referred to as a consensual arrangement such as a "relationship" or an "affair".
- There is also increasing use of interviewing of family members of a victim for dramatic effect. This is so especially when law enforcement or the judicial system is not adequately handling the case or facilitating justice.

To receive Ms. Heron's entire report, please contact WMW.

married man high on libido, as Bob most likely was, will "steal some" if the wife is fast asleep at three in the morning. Nothing technical about that, but it is rape." His flippant language portrays a level of indifference about marital rape, while also endorsing the notion that men are uncontrollable sexual beings led by primal instincts that they should really not be held accountable for.

Though examples from the print media are easiest to call upon, all forms of media are equally flawed by their seemingly oblivious promotion of gender-based violence. A past editor of the Jamaica Observer who asked for her name not to be disclosed, agrees. "Newspapers are more sensitive than other media outlets, because newspapers are more permanent", she notes. She argues that television and radio can get away with socially damaging programming as images flash on and off the screen in a matter of seconds, but the print media is forced to be more cautious. After all, music videos such as Mr. Vegas' 'Hot Wuk', with lyrics and imagery that endorse violent sex, cannot be made popular hits by newspapers.

Media & Society

Donna Fraser, Research Officer at the Bureau of Women's Affairs, sums up the profound impact that the media has on society.

"The advances in information technology give rise to global communication networks that transcend national boundaries with impact on public policy and private behaviour and attitudes – particularly that of children and youth. The reinforcement of negative images of women feeds into the learning paradigm and instructs children and young people on the nature of culture and gender role expectations."

WMW's urges media workers to ask themselves pertinent questions such as when reporting on violence, does your work:

Encourage deeper understanding of the root causes of violence?

Encourage critical thinking rather than knee jerk emotional responses?

Encourage people to take action, rather than feel hopeless?

THINK! And take ACTION!

Fraser notes that the under-representation of women as media workers, especially in decision-making positions, helps to continue the norm of presenting negative stereotypical images of women in the media.

Another opinion is that there has been an increase of women media workers, even in

positions of power. For instance, Wyvolyne Gager and Jenni Campbell have been Editor-In-Chief and Managing Editor at the Gleaner, respectively. Marcia Forbes and Kay Osbourne have both been at the helm of TVJ. But, considering that women make up half of the Jamaican population, and do not make up half of the media workers, and worse, half of all senior posts within Jamaican media houses, women are still under-represented. Further, women are generally steered to cover 'soft' news, as features writers and lifestyle reporters.

With or without enough women as players within the media system, gender stereotyping thrives within the current structure, due to years of entrenched gender insensitive editorial policy.

According to Carmen Patterson, the media needs to play an advocacy role for the elimination of violence against women. She suggests public education campaigns as one means. And, as stated by Donna Fraser and supported by WMW, "...the media has a great potential to make a far greater contribution to the advancement of women and gender equality", and of course, the reduction in gender-based violence too. **WMW**

Written by Kinisha O'Neill Correia

WMW PROFILE

Sharene McKenzie

Meet Sharene McKenzie, a **WMW** Board Member working as a Civil Society Specialist with USAID's Community Empowerment and Transformation Project. The

project is facilitating development in the communities of Grants Pen, Central Village and Flanker and began in March 2006. According to Sharene, "I

am passionate about people's well being and about my job."



WMW: What keeps you busy?

SM: I am busy designing and implementing capacity building activities for community based organizations as part of my job description as Civil Society Specialist USAID-Community Empowerment and Transformation Project. I spend time partying, reading and lying with friends.

WMW: What are your passions?

SM: I'm passionate about life. Life should be lived to its fullest - hard work and good fun.

WMW: How do you feel about being a **WMW** Member/Board Member?

SM: I am honoured to be a Media Watch Board member as I see it as an organization that looks out for women's rights which ultimately is looking out for human rights.

WMW welcomes the arrival of our newest member - Alain Chris-Ann Marie Furzer. Alain was born in January to **WMW** member and administrator Dawnette Hinds-Furzer and her husband Rupert. We wish them all the best!



WMW Highlights

WMW ended 2007 with a flurry of activity as **WMW** trainers whisked off to Barbados to conduct gender training for journalists from around the region, on behalf of Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO). The training, dubbed "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment", educated thirteen journalists, editors and programme producers from all over the Caribbean as gender is increasingly recognised as a key factor underpinning many problems in Caribbean society. The journalists ended their 2-day intensive training by brainstorming creative ideas for putting a gender lens on news stories—whether for print, radio and television.

some people in our workshop come with very limiting ideas about women's and men's roles, they leave with fresh perspectives on how to relate to the other sex, and new ideas about their true potential.



WMW Member, Afolashade, with social workers at Social Welfare Training Centre at the University of the West Indies. WMW conducted gender training with over 50 social workers in January 2008.

WMW continues to offer our special style of lively gender-awareness and violence-prevention workshops. In late 2007 we provided training for over 60 Church Leaders and 20 Peer Counselors across the island, organized through the Caribbean Conference of Churches and the Jamaica Ecumenical Movement. We engaged some 250 parents in St. Elizabeth in practicing gender-responsive parenting skills. And in January 2008 we provided gender training for over 50 trainee social workers from around the Caribbean, at the Social Welfare Training Institute, UWI.

In 2008, **WMW** will focus on women's sexual rights as human rights, and continue to lobby for reform of laws on sexual offences. **WMW** is galvanizing some gender-trained male leaders for some intense collaborative work. Many of them have already added their voices to the call for gender justice. This year **WMW** intends be at the forefront of even louder calls for gender equity and an end to gender-based violence.

"Instead of looking at a person's gender to decide if they can lead, look at the person's qualities." This comment was from a young man at the close of a recent **WMW** workshop on gender and leadership. This same participant, at the start of the session, was adamant that men, not women, are meant to lead. The women participants agreed that the workshop had given useful tips on "how to let others know that both females and males have equal rights".



WMW's Hilary Nicholson & Patricia Donald get help from Belize TV producer Keith Swith

Encouraging critical thinking around gender is what **WMW** is able to do thanks to our workshop sponsors, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and CIDA. We have been reaching out to young women and men in a series of workshops on gender, leadership and violence-prevention for young leaders from inner-city communities in the Kingston & St. Andrew Action Forum (KSA-AF). Though



Rory (left) and Jomo (right) display certificates from participating in "Young Leaders Managing Gender", a course for leaders in the Kingston & St. Andrew Action Forum (KSAAF) sponsored by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and delivered by WMW.