

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Opinion | The Violation of the Girl Child: A Socially Acceptable Phenomenon?

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Why are you so shocked? Where have you been living? If you were not aware these are not isolated events. They are daily happenings. They are happenings that have woven themselves into the very fabric of our society. These happenings are not island or region specific. It is actually a global pandemic that has been around for generations. As Ms. Ingrid Charles-Gumbs has so ably paraphrased it, "We have to stop the practice of eating our young." She was not only referring to the kidnapping, forced rape or violation of our young girls but also the father who says, "I ain't hatching no chicken for no mongoose to eat. I eating the chicken myself." In reference to his own flesh and blood, this man also remarks with much bravado, "I ain't clearing no ground for monkey to run 'pon. You got to be drunk! I clearing the ground for myself." This father does not view providing the basic

needs for his girl child as his responsibility but rather an investment in securing his sexual gratification.

We hear the comments from time to time, "Oh them things does go on in dey family...it run in dey blood, they can't help...is de same thing the father used to do to he own daughters...and the grandfather too...it in dey blood man...they say is somebody put them so." Sometimes we see the 'lil belly" rising and we start the 'shoo-shooing," "Buh she doh go no way, is from school, church to home. I never see she talk to a boy yet and these boys in the village ain't so brazen because they know she father head no good and he does keep he cutlass near, so how is it she end up breed?"

Ms. Gumbs was referring to that iron-fisted 'rimpse" patriarch, that grandfather who beds his daughter then in his old feeble age casts eyes, ready to slaughter the lamb, his own grandchild. And the child's mother out off ear or because she has somehow blocked it or is in denial thinking, 'Daddy wouldn't trouble his own grandchild...lord, he not that bad man...he old and feeble...he change." She fails to protect her child. The old man's wife turns a blind eye as she did all those decades ago while this old wretch sets out for the slaughter, sets out for the kill. Don't be too shocked, as I have said before these are daily happenings.

Ms. Gumbs was referring to that overly generous uncle who takes a more than keen interest in the girl child. He provides her with that father figure she so longs for; feeding her, clothing her, being so attentive to her and fattening her for the kill, but society we fail to acknowledge these things. She was referring to that friendly neighbor or even the elderly old man up the road who no one would ever suspect because "he so nice". She was referring to those same ones who always 'ladening" down the girl child with all kinds of packages and I am not saying that all of these men are like this but just showing you that these happenings take many forms. Some of these same men use their kindness then their wiles to entrap, molest and rape our young.

Ms. Gumbs was referring to that mother's boyfriend who because his eyes so 'long" decides he has grown tired of the mother and wants fresh, young meat to eat...so he begins to devour; while this young girl is violated and has her innocence ripped from right between her legs. He satisfies himself while the mother because she wants to keep the money flowing in her direction turns a blind eye; while the mother beats her daughter brutally out of some twisted jealousy; gives her bush tea to drink or carries her to the 'butcher" when she misses her period. Society, we know of these happenings.

We know because we gossip about them and we do ABSOLUTELY NOTHING. We accept it and make excuses for it. We try to rationalize it by claiming the mother had little choice. She has to survive. What else is she to do? As far as we are concerned that is the daughter's contribution in helping out the household. The family has to eat. Bills have to be paid. Her contribution is prostituting her little body, giving up her worth in order to help her mother keep things together. The rationale is, that this arrangement is better than the mother stealing then she ends up in jail leaving children motherless or the mother going out and prostituting herself for society to 'cry shame off of her." This little arrangement serves all well because it is done in the privacy and confines of the home. Everyone wins.

One mother told her daughter, "Don't worry, is nothing but sex, God give you that talent to work, so you must work it, it better than giving it way to some one them dirty little boy for free...don't worry it ain't going mashup...you will have plenty to give whoever come after." Who knows? Maybe this was that mother's way of appeasing herself. I sat at a bar the other day and I couldn't help but overhear a conversation that three burly men were having. These men were towering, ferocious looking and husky but the conversation disgusted me so much that I could not help but address the ignorance. Their topic of discussion was 'young meat.' These men had to be in their mid to late forties. One man said, "These young girls do want it, as soon as they buss they lil breast the ready for man."

Another one said, "These girls look like big, big woman who could handle big things, they ready for it, why we must leave them?" The other said, "Boy, I understand for true you know, them girls hot. You don't see them in the band? They lil bumsy does be wining and rolling, calling you, dem dey ehnn no children, dem dey could tell you things you and all don't know, I can't see them as children, I know it ehnn right, but if I get the chance I ain't going lie; I going take it...is food and man must eat." These men were laughing and knocking bottles. They were actually rationalizing this behavior. I must say to date it was the most disgusting and upsetting conversation to have ever passed my ears. Adding to my disgust, the owner of the establishment – a woman at that, joined the conversation and said, "Maybe is wha these young girls eating nowadays but when them girls taste that thing it hard to get them to stop, and they move off the young boys and go on to the men...so I could see where you all coming from."

At that point I could hold my tongue, no longer. I asked, "Are you actually listening to yourselves? Are you actually going justify this act? These are innocent little girls, who shouldn't even have to worry about men your age 'putting question to them.'" What do you mean by they are ready or by they want it? Do you honestly think they want this or is it something you just tell yourself to justify your lust and your intent? "How could you in your right mind condone the eating of 'young meat?'" This whole thing is just pure nastiness because I'm sure if someone troubled your daughter or some one of your family members your view on this whole thing would be completely different." I was so shaken by this encounter that I marched off without the food I had ordered.

For years, society has turned a blind eye to these happenings. The whole thing is horrendous but we are only outraged when it becomes public or the consequences of the incidents are made public. These things take place on a daily basis and we turn a blind eye. Some matters reach before the courts and the cases are dismissed because the victim refuses to cooperate after the mother's palm had been properly greased by the accuser. He goes free; free in order to commit another crime. Society do you know what we say, "Oh thank God he ain't end up in jail, look how he life would have gone for nothing because that lil girl wanted it and she done start so she going continue to take man." We consider some of these things to be family matters best dealt with in the confines of the home. It is simply nobody's business. We ask, "When you jail the father how the family going eat?" But, really, really who cares? I ask? Who cares when this is something that is happening to mere girls? Society has much more serious things to contend with other than the brutal and wanton violation of girls. I often question as well, why the MEN in our society are so up in arms about raising the age of consent. This baffles me. Where are the women? Where are the mothers? Where are the men who

want protection for his daughters?I am just asking. Society this says a lot about our views on protecting the innocence and virtue of the girl child but that is another article.

Submitted by: By Mutryce A. Williams Ph.D.

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