



Pum Pum, Love and Erotic Power: A Black British Feminist Analysis of Male and Female Sexualities in Jamaica

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Abstract

This paper explores the intersections of theories about 'Pum Pum Power', 'Love Power' and 'Erotic Power'. Pum Pum is the Jamaican euphemism for the vagina. 'Pum Pum Power' writers, the late Sajoya who was also a lawyer and her daughter Chandis who is an artist, argue that Jamaican women use their genitalia to dominate men. The Icelandic political scientist and gender studies academic Anna Jonasdottir analyses men's exploitation of women's authoritative, creative and reproductive 'love power' in unequal exchanges of intimate pleasure and unpaid caring responsibilities. Professor and former principal, of the University of the West Indies at the Cave Hill Campus in Barbados, Eudine Barriteau applies Jonasdottir's standpoint. Barriteau examines the manner that middle class women in Barbados who are powerful in the public spheres of education, employment and politics are relatively alienated and powerless in their heterosexual relationships. My project probes the degree to which these viewpoints are connected to the assessment of the 'erotic as power' by the African-American feminist, womanist, writer and activist Audre Lorde (RIP). Lorde maintains that eroticism is a forceful personal, ideological, social, economic and political influence both within romantic relationships and in wider society that most women are not aware of yet. Gaining this knowledge, love, imagination and creative energy is empowering because it radically transforms women's socio-sexual identities and experiences. The responses to anonymous and open-ended questionnaires that were completed by male and female tertiary level students at the Edna Manley College of the Visual and Performing Arts in Kingston reveal their perceptions about love, sexualities and power. Many of my research participants challenge the cultural, religious and moral policing of their bodies, love and sexualities in order to achieve egalitarian partnerships in Jamaica.

Key words: Pum Pum, Erotic, Love and Power