



Get Our Caribbean Email
Free. Every Day.
Click here to sign up.

1

Human Rights on a Caribbean Island

June 16, 2015 | 7:47 pm | [Print](#)

[Recommend](#) [Share](#) Be the first of your friends to recommend this.



29

By Marcia Forbes, PhD
CJ Contributor

[Tweet](#)

This is what many highly educated and intelligent Jamaicans believe:
Buju Banton was set-upon by wicked gays who engineered his lock-up by the USA.

Even more of the less intelligent and less educated also believe this. They feel the “gays” were intent on punishing Buju for his ‘Boom Bye Bye’ lyrics, reportedly written during the late 1980s when Banton was a mere 15 years of age, but which he continued to perform well into adult life. Many Jamaicans still refuse to accept that Buju was trafficking cocaine. Some cried openly when in June 2011 he was found guilty and locked away in a US jail for ten years. They argue that the much loved and highly talented DJ was unfairly incarcerated and should be released. Some of Buju’s supporters may despise gays for what they see as the group’s dastardly act. Furthermore, some Jamaicans support Buju’s homophobic lyrics.

LAPOP – Latin American Public Opinion Poll

I use public sentiment surrounding Buju, his anti-homosexual lyrics and subsequent incarceration to frame some recent findings from an extensive study conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Poll (LAPOP). Data were collected from 28 countries, with 8 from the Caribbean: Guyana, Suriname, Haiti, Dominican Republic and Jamaica. Interviews were conducted at the household level and with 1,500 persons in each of the countries that participated. By any measure this is extensive data collection.

Importantly, LAPOP studies have been running over many years and conducted in a manner that facilitate trend analysis and meaningful comparisons. The 2014 findings can be compared with those for 2012, 2010, 2008 and 2006.

Storm Clouds Gathering for Jamaica

As I listened to presenters at the well-attended launch event at which several key findings were presented and discussed by academics and USAID representatives, it was clear that storm clouds are gathering across Jamaica and especially with regard to our relationships with homosexuals. Overall Jamaica is becoming less tolerant of gays and their rights as human beings. How else could one explain a fall-off in support for the right of homosexuals to run for office in Jamaica, from 19.8% in 2006 to 16.0% in 2014? This despite global trends in support for the gay community. On a scale of 1 to 10, with ‘strongly approve’ and ‘strongly disapprove’ as extreme opposites, a stunning 69.1 percent of Jamaicans ‘strongly disapprove’ of homosexuals’ right to run for office, while a mere 5.3% ‘strongly approve’. Of the 28 countries, Jamaica falls among the bottom five regarding tolerance for homosexuals.

When this high level of intolerance is coupled with a growing support for vigilante justice, a decreasing support for democracy, rising unemployment levels and growing disparities in income distribution in Jamaica, it is not difficult to see strong potential for civil unrest. Some of the presenters specifically highlighted this threat and urged the Government to be alert and to implement measures to dampen the risks. Increasing levels of education and employment of Jamaicans are two key measures.

Young, Educated, Wealthy Women Least Homophobic

But it is not all doom and gloom. Using multivariate analysis, LAPOP was able to tease out a profile of those likely to be more tolerant of the right of gay people to run for public office in Jamaica.



Those who are more educated, more politically tolerant and are female stand out as bright beacons of hope. “Wealth is also positively correlated with tolerance”, noted the well-produced book that details the findings. Younger people are also generally more tolerant, with those in the 26 to 35 years age band seeming to be more so than other age groups.

As expected, based on the dogma of the Christian religion, those who place great value on the importance of religion were the ones most intolerant to gays in public office.

No Marriage for Homosexuals

“Jamaicans unequivocally reject the notion of same-sex couples being afforded the right to marry. Ninety-six percent of those surveyed are either neutral or outright disapproving...with 89% expressing total disapproval....This level of opposition is markedly stronger in 2014 than the stance against homosexuals being permitted to run for public office in Jamaica.” (Page 190)

The above excerpt is from *Political Culture of Democracy in Jamaica and in the Americas, 2014: Democratic Governance across 10 Years of the Americas Barometer*, the previously mentioned book that came out of the LAPOP poll. Written by Harriott, Lewis and Zechmeister of the University of the West Indies (Harriott and Lewis) and Vanderbilt University, a copy was given to all in attendance.

Full Circle with Buju Banton

With the global trend in support of gay marriage and especially within the context of homosexuals and human rights, where do these strong opposing views leave Jamaica? How does this country move forward on human rights issues when what looks like a large community of lesbians, bi-sexuals, gays and transgendered people in Jamaica are deprived of theirs?

“Wanna be loved

Not for who you think I am

Nor what you want me to be

Could you love me for me?”

— Buju Banton

Can Jamaicans learn to love homosexuals for who they are and not for what we want them to be?

Dr Marcia Forbes, a Caribbean Journal contributor, is a media specialist, the co-owner of multimedia production company Phase 3 Productions Ltd and Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Caribbean Institute of Media & Communication, University of the West Indies, Mona. She is the author of Music, Media & Adolescent Sexuality in Jamaica and the recently-released [Streaming: Social Media, Mobile Lifestyles](#).

Follow Dr Marcia Forbes on Twitter: [@marciaforbes](#)



Tweet



Share

[Opinion](#) [caribbean](#), [caribbean news](#), [human rights](#), [jamaica](#), [usa](#)

Related Stories

1. [St Vincent and the Grenadines Exploring Geothermal Energy](#)
2. [Royal Caribbean Names New Chief Marketing Officer](#)
3. [Barbados, Georgia Eye Formal Diplomatic Relations](#)
4. [Sandals Planning Renovations at Montego Bay Resort](#)
5. [British Virgin Islands Completes Ferry Terminal Renovation](#)

Most Popular

1. [The 50 Best Caribbean Beach Bars](#)
2. [The 25 Best Caribbean All-Inclusive Resorts – 2014](#)
3. [The 10 Best All-Inclusive Resorts in Punta Cana](#)
4. [The Best Caribbean All-Inclusive Resorts for 2015](#)
5. [The Best Hotels in Anguilla](#)

[« Previous](#)

[Next »](#)

Recommend Share Be the first of your friends to recommend this.