

**SEX AND THE YOUTH**

**By Stephenson Thomas**

In a society where erotic material is easily available, displayed and accepted, people still wonder why the moral compasses of adolescents is pointing in the wrong direction. In Trinidad and Tobago we are ranked third in the statistics of AIDS cases in the Caribbean. We as a country need to take a good look at ourselves and ask: What are we doing wrong?

Promiscuous behaviour and the youth are directly associated with one another. It is the concept that has been taken to be the norm. Factors like the media, peer pressure and drugs may have driven youths to engage in sexual activities, but with most of the population having an ignorance of the topic and society being blind about the reality, where are youths supposed to turn?

The information that youths normally receive makes them even more curious about the whole idea of sex, but when they receive this information, it comes without the knowledge about the consequences of sex. Consequences like sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. This can then proliferate itself to teenagers having children they cannot care for emotionally or economically.

A child being raised in this situation may become a teenager who may commit crimes which increases the crime situation in the country. They can even become sexually active and be, or get someone else pregnant, repeating the whole cycle again. Another scenario could be most of the country's youth population dying due to sexually transmitted diseases. In that case, how can the country develop? A country's most important resource is its human resource.

Parents have a very important role to play in informing their children about sex. They should put much emphasis on the consequences that can result from having sex. They should teach them about the responsibility that goes along with it.

The church also has a very important role. They should teach young people about spirituality and give them a moral guide on how they are supposed to approach the situation. As a society, we must all address this matter and give young people proper information about sex. Sex may be a sensitive issue, but it is an important issue and one we must look at seriously.

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**SEX AND THE LAW**

Sexual activity during teenage years is not only emotionally, educationally and economically unwise but, believe it or not, also illegal. Here's what the law has to say:

## **RAPE**

### **. . . without consent**

A person commits rape when he has sexual intercourse with another person without the consent of the person where:

- he knows that the person does not consent to the intercourse or
- he is reckless as to whether the person consents i.e. he didn't care to find out

### **. . . with consent**

A person commits rape when he has sexual intercourse with another person with the consent of that person where:

- the consent is extorted by threat or fear of bodily harm to the person or another person,
- the consent is obtained through impersonation
- the consent is obtain by unlawfully holding a person

## **SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A FEMALE UNDER FOURTEEN**

A male person who has sexual intercourse with a female person under the age of 14 years, who is not his wife, is guilty of an offence:

- whether or not the female person consented to the intercourse and
- whether or not at the time of the intercourse he believed her to be 14 years of age or more and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for life.

## **SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH A FEMALE BETWEEN FOURTEEN AND SIXTEEN**

A male person who has sexual intercourse with a female person who is not his wife, with her consent and who has attained the age of 14 years but has not yet attained the age of sixteen, is guilty of an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for 12 years for a first offence and to imprisonment for 15 years for a subsequent offence.

## **SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH MALE UNDER SIXTEEN**

Where a female adult has sexual intercourse with a male person who is not her husband and who is under the age of 16 years, she is guilty of an offence, whether or not the male person consented to the intercourse and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for 5 years.

## **INCEST**

A person commits incest when he or she has sexual intercourse with a person he/she knows is his or her parent, child, brother, sister (half-brother, half-sister), grandparent, grandchild, uncle, niece, aunt or nephew.

The maximum penalty for incest is life imprisonment

## **SEXUAL INTERCOURSE WITH ADOPTED MINOR**

An adult is guilty of an offence if he or she has sexual intercourse with a minor (person under the age of 18) who is the adult's adopted child, stepchild, foster child, ward or dependent and is in the adult's custody.

The maximum penalty for this offence is life imprisonment.

### **Did you know that . .**

If you are present when a rape occurs and do not report it or try to stop it, you can be charged for rape as well, regardless of whether you are male or female.

If a parent knows that his or her son or daughter under the age of 16 is having sex, that parent can be charged with an offence.

Sex with a person (male or female) under the age of 14, regardless of the age of the partner and regardless of whether it was forced or not, is an offence that carries the same penalty as rape.

*Source: Sexual Offences Act*