

ABSTRACT

Jamaican women have become quite vocal in their campaign for recognition of their role beyond being wives and mothers. In this quest, they often borrow the perceptions of women of the developed world and use such perceptions to interpret the conditions of women, past and present. This has sometimes resulted in faulty claims which imply that it is in these closing decades of the twentieth century that Jamaican women have been making strides, have been progressing as they struggle for a place in what is essentially a man's world. Much of this is propaganda based on a faulty premise.

A corrective to this propaganda is attempted in this study. The propaganda of modern feminists claims that sovereign man kept women out of the productive sector, that women being home-based had little to offer the society, and that women classed as second class citizens were dependent and oppressed.

The claim of this study is that, despite images/impressions to the contrary, the overriding theme in female activities in Jamaica in the period 1844 to 1944 was one of female affirmation and creativity channelled into getting on with any job at hand. They were less concerned about ascribed status than survival. They grasped every and any opportunity made available and effectively "worked the system" to create an opening that could not be closed once opened. Thus, they moved beyond being wives, mothers and agricultural workers, to become professional women.