

## ABSTRACT

### Free Black and Coloured Women

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### White Man's Slave Society

Sheena Boa

This is a study of women living in Jamaica from 1760-1834 who were black or coloured and were either born free or freed from slavery. The problems of using a suitable terminology for this group have been discussed by Jerome Handler in his study of Barbadian free blacks and coloureds<sup>(1)</sup> and by Gad Heuman in his book on Jamaica<sup>(2)</sup>. I have followed their examples and will use the terms freedmen and freedwomen when the exact colour is not known and when talking in general terms about people both black and coloured. I will also use the term freedpeople when dealing with both sexes. The term free coloured is used for people of mixed European and African heritage who were not slaves and the term free black is used to describe people of purely African descent who were not slaves. Freedwomen, therefore, is in this study, a synonym of the term free black and coloured women and both terms have been applied to women who were manumitted from slavery or born as free citizens. The term white describes people of European descent and the term free people includes both whites and freedpeople.

(1) Jerome Handler, The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados. (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press 1973), pp. 5-6.

(2) Gad Heuman, Between Black and White: Race, Politics and the Free Coloreds in Jamaica, 1792-1865. Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press 1981) pp. xix-xx

## ABSTRACT (cont'd.)

This study examines the economic, social, political and educational roles of freedwomen in Jamaica during the last seventy odd years of slavery. It also looks at the prevailing attitudes of race, class and sex held by the dominant white male society and how these affected and influenced freedwomen. Freedwomen did not form a uniform group; they included wealthy educated eurocentric women, poor uneducated rural freed slaves, Africans, creole blacks and creoles of mixed blood. Their attitudes and lifestyles varied enormously. Some women conformed to European standards and ideals while others retained close links with the slaves. This study looks at the various classes of freedwomen and how they tackled the barriers imposed on them by the whites.