

Sexuality in the African  
N.S. Community April 19/95  
PDR Sex Health Education  
Review Committee

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- Employment History - May 91 - Apr. 94 - NSPWA  
Coalition B.O.P. - HIV/AIDS ed to ANS com, included work  
around Sex. in the ANS, issues for Blk youth, women etc.  
• Presently - OXFAM CANADA/DEVERIC - dev. ed. int'l & locally.

②

- Sexuality - Here today to address the issue of sexuality  
from a Blk Cultural persp. or my knowledge of Sex. in  
the African Com - African meaning growing up in the  
ANS Com and from my exp. of just returning from  
the continent.

• All know Sexuality is more than sex. It's who you  
are and how you live as a human being. Relating to other  
people as a sexual person, a loving person - as a woman  
or as a man who can love and is lovable. Relationships  
btw the sexes are not easy - it can be awkward and un-  
comfortable. Society has a certain picture of who & what a  
man or woman should be, but in most cases the kind  
of sexual, loving person you want to be is probably  
a mixture of traditional masculine & feminine traits.  
Sexuality needs to be based on the kind of behavior you  
believe will make you the happiest now and in the  
future.

\* refer to June 5 presentation

④ Black peoples sexuality was exploited during the slave period

- Blk people were degraded, humiliated and fought to keep their faith and tradition alive. Blk women were seen as sex objects - they were raped by their masters, used as childbearers, stripped of their pride and dignity.

- At the same time, Blk men were physically abused and forced to see their families struggle to survive. Blk women felt a need to sexually comfort their husbands, lovers etc.

- Blk women & men were not allowed to be together, they secretly met, this resulted in a lot of breeding, young women having children.

⑤ African Continent experience

- many discussions with people in Africa about sexuality due to the work I was doing - eval. YHE Centres in Gambia and HIV/AIDS work in Zimbabwe.

• Polygamy - 2nd & 3rd wives try very hard to please their man <sup>sexually</sup> when he only comes to them once a month.

• Once a woman is married to a man she has to have sex with him when he wants it. Woman can only remain married and in the same house if she has sex when he wants it and the way he wants. It is out of the question not to live with her husband in the compound without having sex. If she doesn't, she will be kicked out of the compound.

• Teenages - no sex with girl interested in marrying

• Virgin when they are too marry.

• assumption - women only have sex to produce babies,

not suppose to get pleasure out of it. Once they reach menopause, they don't need sex.

⑥\* Refer to June 5 presentation - My experience

⑦ Refer to B & F book for exercise - <sup>stereotypes</sup> male & female <sup>relationships</sup>  
• Society has some stereotypes and biases with regard to M-F relationships.

Race adds even more. You may feel that BIK men act only in certain ways with women and likewise. You may have stereotypes about men and women from other racial groups. This affects the way you answer questions like: What kind of person should I date? etc.

⑧ Social Aspects - refer to sheet

⑨ Advice - refer to sheet

- Talk about the BIK church

- very influential institution - taught to abstain from sex before marriage

- preached to children - no exp to engage in sex activity

- didn't see it necessary to discuss it

- Never talked about due to abuse, exploitation in slavery years

Not being allowed to be together, sneaking around <sup>recall: bleeding, young women having children - excuse for</sup>

- Mom/Dad never explained about getting breast, menstrual cycle <sup>extract</sup>

- taught by older sisters - advantage, decade for BIK women who has all brothers

positive - older sisters, girlfriends in community talked, took initiative myself to go on pill

Negative - slavery movies didn't help me deal with my own

sex as a BIK woman - seeing BIK women abused, exploited,

used as sex objects, sent mixed and confused messages

Slavery years BIK women had strong maternal instinct

BIK com today - many extended families, childbearing instinct)

② Social aspects impact on sexuality - blond hair, flowing hair, blue eyes, light skin are the socially desirable qualities wanted by society. BIK people do not naturally have these qualities. Hair is somewhat coarse, we have brown eyes and BIK skin. BIKs will get hair straightened, relaxed, get blue contacts, dye hair blond etc. We have a hard time understanding our natural beauty especially at a young age. Use ex - Africans portrayed, BIK dolls seen as ugly etc. because we see ourselves as being unattractive, some of us abstain from sex, some are seen as promiscuous, this also confuses us about our sexuality and feeling comfortable with our sexuality).

③ Knowing all of this, what advice do I give to educators, care-givers etc. The advice I give is to try and

understand our experience. Understand that if we have difficulty confronting sexuality and feeling comfortable with our sexuality, as we grow, you can imagine the problems we have with associating ourselves with sexually transmitted disease such as AIDS/HIV. Understand that our experience growing up and confronting our sexuality was not easy and the difficulty was reinforced by neg stereotypes portrayed in the media etc. Learning to understand my experience as a BIK person particularly a BIK woman is a major ~~task~~ step in the right direction for educators, nurses, caregivers etc.)

Thank you!

- Teenagers get a lot of info from each other. Many discussions btw themselves therefore they need access to accurate info to pass around
- need to know that sex is healthy, feelings about sex are normal, natural and can be expressed without putting yourself at risk.
- need to receive straight forward, not distorted info