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What exactly is a Family Man? Performing, Precluding and De-fetishising Respectability in Dominica

From plantation to present the idea of the father has often inhabited a troubled place in the Caribbean imagination. Whether caricatured in shades of absence or struggling to fulfil patriarchal imperatives to provide for, guide and protect one's kin, dedicated working class fathers often appear invisible in discussions of what it means to be a 'family man'. This badge is instead issued to middle and upper middle-class men of social standing, marriage and rank, more a reflection of a man's status and 'respectability', than his everyday kinship labour or involvement in children's lives.

In this paper I interrogate the idea of the father and the image of the family man in Dominica: from the ethnographic vantage of a friend and working-class felon turned father who strives for respectable redemption; through observant participation in the activities of CariMAN, a middle class men's group who advocate for 'good fathering'; and through the memories of an elder retired police officer and full time father who reflects back on his lifetime of parenting and being parented through shifting fatherhoods.

Together these ethnographic groundings demand a consideration of more expansive, inclusive and practice-oriented visions of what it might mean to be a family man and dad in Dominica.

Adom Philogene Heron is an ethnographer of the Caribbean whose scholarship centres on Caribbean ecologies, hurricanes, and repair; Britain's haunted post-slavery land/seascapes; and Caribbean fatherhood and family lives. He is committed to collaborative, interdisciplinary, and experimental research methods. Adom received his PhD (in anthropology) from the University of St Andrews in 2017. Previously at Goldsmiths (London), he now works as a Lecturer in Visual Anthropology at the University of Bristol.

Weitere Informationen: www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de



Okim and his
daughter,
Carnival Tuesday,
2013.

Photo: Adom
Philogene Heron.

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Leitung: Heike Drothboom

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