

Causes of social stratification in the caribbean

[Society](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Question: What are the causes of social stratification in the Caribbean?

Throughout our lives, there must have been some form of categorization whether your complexion or financial status. Even in today's society, people are judged and put into groups based on their race or even sometimes religion. This is known as Social Stratification. This however could not be possible without a diversified Caribbean that is present today. Cultural Diversity then speaks about the different ethnic traditions such as custom, race and language that are found in the society.

Take for example Jamaica that has a motto " Out of Many One People". This can be seen as a perfect example as many different races or ethnic groups reside in Jamaica and widely the Caribbean. As a result, a means of Social Stratification takes place in the society. Mohammad (2007) states that it is a ranking system which organizes or places persons in the society in a hierarchy. In addition, it can be classified as a characteristic of society as it appears to be present in most of our Caribbean islands.

Although this is viewed as a form of inequality, the system was derived from events that took place some years ago. The main causes of social stratification are the Plantation System, Emancipation and Social Mobility. Historically, this system started on the fields of the sugar plantation. The persons who toiled in the hot sun in the fields were known as slaves and were viewed as the " lesser people". Their masters however were the opposite as they had all the power and wealth so they were seen as more highly and respectable individuals.

A distinction between them had begun as the gap between them had gotten bigger due to the mobility of the masters. A hierarchy was built and the slaves could be seen at the bottom due to the bias judgment of the pigment of their skin. During this period of history according to Greenwood (2003), a middle class was also developed owing to the fact that not all persons were classified as slaves or whites. Therefore a middle class was now a part of the hierarchy and they were called the mulattos.

These sets of people were still judged on the colour of their skin and the materialistic things that they owned. This brought much segregation and division among them because of the differing cultures and the whites believing that they were better than others around them. Emancipation which took place years after the Plantation System with the slaves also helped with Social stratification that most Caribbean islands are experiencing now. Emancipation is the period in history when many of the African slaves got freed.

Despite the fact that freeing the slaves was indeed an advantage to them, it brought a negative effect. With freedom came the advantage of schooling and getting educated, however not many persons were able to go forward with it. There was a division among the Blacks or the ex-slaves as only the better ones were able to get the chance to be taught. When this took place, many of the ex-slaves felt that they were lesser than even their own race or group and so there was categorizing present as even the whites were then divided into two groups, the Petite and the Blancs.

This caused much hatred among them as social status made them feel as though they were superior to others. With the use of the hierarchy, there must have been some movement of persons whether up or down the ranking of the social ladder. This is known as social mobility; which even in today's society it is taking place. It is even taking place as we speak. Mohammed (2007) states " Education is the primary means of accessing social mobility throughout the region" (p. 65). It is through education that most of the Caribbean leaders rise to such high authority or positions.

Even in today's society, it is the persons who are wealthy and are of light complexion that gets recognition for jobs and positions. Everyone else who falls below that, is classified as poor and is in the lower class on the hierarchy. Weber argues that social class is primarily based on power, prestige or status. In conclusion it can be said that social stratification all started from the days of slavery and even nowadays persons are still being ranked on race, colour, sex, religion and finance.

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