

## IS THE CONDITION PERMANENT?

How can one embrace a festival such as carnival? Is it designed for an arena where its masqueraders, participants, and viewers are transported to the scene of the event and then choreographed for the tube via satellite or other transmittal networks? Should its base be on the streets where all can satisfy their artistic appetite and embrace this dynamic world of movement and flux? I am postulating the latter as a world view which embraces the “ritual masks” of individualism, which can be classified as tranquil but mobile and active or even aggressive, which subjectively or objectively is the essence of carnival. The uninhabited, demanding, powerful presence of the masquerade fosters disharmony thus creating conflict between social beings and the inner personalities to free up or create a new spirit of individual freedom. A DECAYING OF SELF. Hence according to Chinua Achebe, “You do not stand in one place to watch a masquerade, you must imitate its motion. The kinetic energy of the masquerade’s art is thus instantly transmitted to a whole arena of spectators.”

Is it process in motion in view of the world or is the condition permanent? I was in Miami on October 10–12, 2003 to view the carnival of which there were two—Broward Carnival, Fort Lauderdale Stadium Fair Grounds and Homestead Miami Speedway. I attended the latter. The scenery was breath taking, the colors, the

food, the costumes, the masqueraders—from terror to delight, the bands, DJs and the spectators representing the scope of the human experience—old to young. The education has already taken a hold on the society: the integration of different cultures, creeds, and races. People embracing each other dancing with or without “masks”—ritual dances par excellence displaying impressive motion and agility while keeping their feet planted, freeing up, and embracing the crossroads of culture. Carnival is dialogue and the spirit of carnival can be used as a valuable tool in race relations to counter racism and create a mental revolution in the society, opening transformation.

How does one compete in carnival? How does one judge a band—king/queen? What is the criterion? Are there cronyism, tribalism and racism? I do not know, so I am asking. Carnival has become structured with defined leadership, which adds a tone of rigidness to free expression, a form of liberation—freedom free-up a death and a resurrection, a fundamental psychological transformation. Does the stick fighter have a role? Anyway you look at it, the carnival continues to evolve and its spirit is universal.

At Homestead I noticed that the defined food/business courts were bustling with conch salad, fry bake to salsa, reggae, calypso and Zouk echoes of the islands... The bathroom facilities could not accommodate the crowd. One lady placed a towel over her nostrils to enter the ladies’ toilet; she could not enter, but I embraced the opportunity. I had to go... Gender was not applicable. Can what you smell kill?

Byron Lee and the Dragonaires were timely. They summarized the evening.

One of the other structured events I attended was the University of the West Indies and Angostura sponsored fete—\$60 and all you could eat West Indian style. What a treat for most of the tagged and stamped crowd. The bandstand had an array of performances. Machel Montano had a brief stint, but David Rudder demonstrated the art and culture of poetry at its best.

The band Roy Cape demonstrated its talent and artistry while the talented base guitarist basked in the spotlight with precision dance steps. What a spectacle! The band also provided excellent support for guests and local artists.

The crowd was enormous and I must acknowledge Roger, Moses, Selwyn, Ann, Umilta, Nada, Elfie, Ruby, Tai-Sue-Loevng-Tat, Amzad and Leroy, San Fernando and Mamie's People's Carnival King who allegedly placed third in the King competition on Saturday 11, 2003 for portraying a deep sea "Jelly Fish." What conceptualization, creativity and artistry as he demonstrated in choreographic dance steps the jelly fish in its habitat feeding as he exploded on stage. What formatted precision! You could not see any part of his body—a true masquerader. This magnificent performance completed the picture of this memorable carnival experience. The

following is a poetic expression that demonstrates the embodiment of  
carnival.

Ah We Thing!

The carnival (carne-vale)  
An Afrikan thing, a universal festival  
Emerges in any modern society from the “Nile Valley” to the  
streets of Miami...  
A true festival that transforms the “being”  
Before the fast...  
A ritual celebration of spiritual offerings of  
thanksgiving...good/evil—good will  
The common good...  
You must and have to prepare for “the carnival”...  
Initiation...traditional feast...  
Feast—offerings!  
Free up the spirits  
Free up the minds  
Liberate bodies...water/blood-life/death...  
Sacrifice self, sacrifice—purging...  
“The carnival” is unrehearsed, but choreographed...  
“The carnival” is power... it is pure and natural—no demons...  
You embrace “the carnival”  
It emerges...  
It is assertive...it generates and creates solidarity...  
Oneness of purpose...

Movement with rhyme and rhythm through varied vibrational  
and non-vibrational instruments

“Beings” sounds-songs—the drum, the drum, the drum

Silence...silence

Instruments...claves, bottle, spoon, iron, cuatro,

Mandolins, guitar, violin, bamboo, maracas, DJ's, pan, flute,

Masqueraders...mokojumbie...jumbie

You cannot sell “the carnival”...

You define “the carnival”...

It is jouvert

It is “bacchanal”

It is Kemite

It is Afrikan

It is universal

It is literary...high extraordinary...prodigious,

Artisanship, clamorous, exquisite, intense, stately...

Splendid, visual, gallant...spirited...yes, spirited.

You dig: spirited.

Afrikan incarnate...

Afrikan incarnate...

Ah we thing!

Afrikan incarnate...

It is universal...

Ah we thing!

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