THE BROOKLYN CARNIVAL: A SITE FOR DIASPORIC CONSOLIDATION

DISSERTATION

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By

Ken Joseph Archer, M.A.

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Dissertation Committee

Professor Ron Emoff, Advisor
Professor Udo Will
Professor Lesley Ferris
Professor Jeffrey Cohen

Approved

Music Graduate Program
Immigrants of the Caribbean have long established communities in various cities of the United States. Prominent among these are the Caribbean neighborhoods of Brooklyn, where the West Indian American Day Parade has been established over the last four decades. This festival and the activities that surround it are illustrative of the fact that, in the face of their new cultural environment, West Indians as a community have tended to be conservative. Put another way, they have tended to resist the forces of change that are brought upon them in their new surroundings. This is not to say that they have not or do not presently interact with and enjoy the new cultural forms afforded to them. But, in doing so, they remain cognizant of their cultural heritage, seek the performance spaces to articulate that heritage, and attempt to ensure it remains part of their children’s lives.

This study examines the ways in which sectors of the Caribbean American community in Brooklyn have used performance media such as music, dance, and masking to mediate uncertainties presented by their migration to the United States. I argue that the Brooklyn Carnival functions as a site in which some measure of...
cultural conservatism on the part of the Caribbean community can be observed. Furthermore, the performance of music and masquerade in the context of these celebrations has facilitated the consolidation of a diverse, diasporic community. More specifically, the Brooklyn Carnival allows its participants to engage notions of diaspora at several operational levels—as Islanders, as Caribbeans, and as Africans—as they celebrate their respective island nations of origin while at the same time forging wider regional and ethnic alliances.
Dedicated to Maia, Russell and Kwesi
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VITA

August 27, 1958................................................. Born – Port of Spain, Trinidad

1996.............................................................. M.A. Music, City University New York

1997 – 2004............................................... Teacher (Music), Ministry of Education

                                          Trinidad and Tobago

2004 – present................................. Graduate Teaching and Research Associate,

                                          Lecturer, The Ohio State University

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Ethnomusicology
4.2 Soca and the Jab Molassie Beat

4.3 Diasporic Linkages Through Rhythm

4.4 The Significance of Jab Molassie

5. Community and Parades

5.1 Voluntary Associations: The Case of the Sesame Flyers

5.2 The Labor Day Carnival Parade

5.3 Dance of Nations

5.4 Different Aesthetics

5.5 Control of the Festival

5.6 J’ouvert

5.7 The Kiddies Carnival

6. Conclusion

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Immigrants of the Caribbean have long established communities in various cities of the United States. Prominent among these are the West Indian/Caribbean neighborhoods of Brooklyn, where the West Indian American Day Parade has been established over the last four decades. This festival and the activities that surround it are illustrative of the fact that in the face of the new cultural environment, West Indians as a community have tended to be conservative. Put another way, they have tended to resist the forces of change that are brought upon them in the new surroundings. This is not to say that they have not interacted with the new cultural forms afforded to them. But in doing so they are cognizant of those things which they consider to be their cultural wherewithal, and they seek the performance spaces within which this can be articulated, while attempting to ensure that their children are kept in touch with this cultural heritage.

This study examines the ways in which sectors of the Caribbean American community in Brooklyn have used performance media such as music, dance and
masking to mediate uncertainties that their new place of abode presents. I argue that the Brooklyn Carnival is a site in which some measure of cultural conservatism on the part of the Caribbean community can be observed. And, the performance of music and masquerade in the context of the celebrations that surround the annual Labor Day Carnival Parade has facilitated the consolidation of a community, which aligns with notions of diaspora at different levels. In this context participants in the Brooklyn Carnival cling to a nationalist “diaspora” by recognizing their respective island nations of origin, while at the same time bonding with a regional Caribbean diaspora that in turn connects to an African diaspora.

Background

The Brooklyn Carnival has its roots in the pre-Lenten Harlem masquerade balls that were organized by a West Indian woman, Jessie Waddell. From 1924-44, in association with other West Indians in Harlem, she promoted some of the biggest masquerade dances at the Renaissance Ballroom in Harlem, and in 1947 she obtained a permit to stage the first outdoor parade along Lennox Avenue from 110th -142nd St (Cadogan 2007, A17). This street festival was then organized annually until the early 1960s when the permit was revoked because of apparent violence that marred the celebrations at that time. The festival was subsequently rekindled, and has been hosted annually by the West Indian American Day Carnival Association over the last four decades. It has become one of the largest street
festivals in North America in which hundreds of thousands of revelers and spectators annually throng to the Eastern Parkway on Labor Day.

Over the period of existence these carnival celebrations in Brooklyn have been the subject of scholarly study and discourse. Philip Scher has addressed the issue of identity formation in the transnational experience. He has expressed the view that the Carnival has become the symbol of a Trinidadian “transnation.” The parade in Brooklyn functions as a kind of memory of place as it has approximated Trinidad Carnival. And, it has also been seen as an important tool that aids the formation of a Trinidadian “transnation” in which links, political, economic, cultural, are forged and maintained between the island home state in the Caribbean and the immigrant communities in metropolitan New York City (Scher 2003). The festival has also been assessed as an avenue through which West Indian identity and the “Caribbeanization” of New York City are constructed in opposition to notions of African-American identity (van Capelleveen, 1995).

Mirroring the work of Stuemple (1995) on the history of the steelband movement in Trinidad and Tobago, study has been pursued on the historical development of the steelband movement in New York, and Brooklyn in particular (Allen and Slater, 2001). The emergence of the J’ouvert celebrations that are held in the early morning hours of Labor Day, and the growth of the steelband movement in Brooklyn in relation to it, have been studied and analyzed (Allen 2003). Allen has argued that the development of this early morning festive event represents the
revitalization of perceived endangered Trinidadian traditions in the Brooklyn cultural milieu. For while the Trinidadian model continues to provide the basis for the Labor Day Carnival in Brooklyn, this parade has come under the increasing influence of the multicultural nature of central Brooklyn and the diversity of the Caribbean groups that participate in the Eastern Parkway parade (Allen 2003:268).

As well, Donald Hill (2001) has written about the role played by individuals such as musician Gerard Clark, calypsonian Lord Invader (Rupert Grant) and others in the popularization of calypso during the “New York City Calypso Craze” of the 1930s and 1940s. And, sociologist Phillip Kasinitz (2001) has expounded on the politics involved in the Brooklyn Carnival celebrations. He has noted that the Carnival is clearly an event in which ethnic, West Indian identity is constructed, but not without contestation between the different groups that have come from the various Caribbean island nations and now share the Brooklyn land space.

In addition to those authors who have written about diverse aspects of the Carnival celebrations in Brooklyn, there are those who have focused more specifically on sociopolitical issues within the broader context of New York’s Caribbean community as a whole. Fonner (2001) has written on West Indian migration from the Caribbean isles into the New York metropolis, noting that the largest emigration flow in West Indian history has occurred over that last four decades during which more than half a million people moved from the Caribbean isles to New York. In the study of the relationship of the Grenadian community in
New York to its island nation of origin, Grenada, Basch has remarked on the “transnational social fields” that traverse geographic, cultural and political borders. Via these networks migrants sustain multithreaded social relations, along family, economic, and political lines, that link their societies of origin and settlement (Basch, 2001). In a similar vein, Watkins-Owens has shown that these transnational practices were alive and well during the first wave of West Indian migration to New York that spanned the first four decades of the twentieth century (Watkins-Owens 2001).

Along with those scholars that have propounded their views on the Brooklyn Carnival and the Caribbean community in New York, others have written on other Carnivals that are often equated to that in Brooklyn on the basis that they were also generated within West Indian Caribbean communities abroad. In dealing with the Caribana festival in Toronto, Canada, Gallaugher has argued that the dominating, non-Caribbean elite in Toronto has erected barricades (physical and otherwise) in order to restrict and limit the impact of these celebrations. And this has been done to shape the perception of this festival and all of Caribbean culture as the exotic other that is desired for its colour, gaiety, splendour, but feared for its barbarity and potential for violence (Gallaugher, 1995).

With regard to the Carnival in Notting Hill, England, Tompsett has pointed out that with its emergence in the circumstance of a hostile British social environment, the culture of the Caribbean British embodied in this event filled the
role of not only recreation, but became an extremely important avenue for self-expression, self-affirmation and as a statement of identity. Subsequent violent conflicts with the police facilitated the development of the Notting Hill Carnival as resistance art and its significance as a means of articulating and affirming black identity and culture within British society (Tompsett, 2005). Ferris has also positioned the Notting Hill Carnival in the context of the discourse around Carnival as theatre, as a visual performance art form in which stories are told. In so doing she notes that:

By circulating costumes that are the cornerstones of Carnival history – history that plays with the duality of slavery and emancipation – Carnival is a microcosm of circum-Atlantic memory, a diasporic “performance of origin” that operates through a layering effect of the present and the past. (Ferris, 2005)

This Project

This dissertation project seeks to add to this body of research and discourse that have been undertaken with regard to the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival and its import to the Caribbean community in Brooklyn, New York. In doing so it embraces many of the issues previously expounded upon by scholars, but it seeks to coalesce many of the different areas of endeavor to reveal ways in which the festive activities of the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival have served the consolidation of a Caribbean Diaspora, and function as a “diasporic performance of origin” (Ferris 2005). As such
this study encompasses interdisciplinary dimensions that embrace aspects of migration and diaspora studies together with the role of the performance arts of music and dance.

This work first addresses the fieldwork activity in which this author engaged to facilitate the data collection process and the acquisition of most of the evidential material upon which this dissertation is based. This project is set in a qualitative framework of investigation that relies in part on the narratives of participants in the annual Labor Day celebrations. In addition to their narrative account the conclusions drawn are also based on videotaped footage of the activity of some of these individual participants, as well as analysis of videotaped material of different aspects of the parades and general festivities that constitute the Brooklyn Carnival celebrations. In so doing, I rely on work of Cresswell (2007) and the collection of essays on the qualitative method edited by Denzin and Lincoln (2000), and show the ways in which my research activity has intersected with posited positions on the qualitative paradigm.

As part of the explication of this project as a qualitative endeavor, this dissertation also embraces the expectations of autoethnography that situates the author within the frame of the research design. This is particularly important in this instance, as this researcher has brought a relatively high degree of familiarity with the topic to the research endeavor. Interpretation of data is a necessary part of any research inquiry, and I, in part, rely on my past experiences with Carnival in
Trinidad and Brooklyn for the interpretation of material collected and the drawing of conclusions. As well, it is my past relationships with Carnival and its various art forms that have led me into this path of further inquiry, and to a large extent this dissertation represents the culmination of a process of questioning in which I have engaged in relation to the various aspects of the festival. As such I present, for the reader, a synopsis of different aspects of my past engagement with these forms and aspects of the Trinidad cultural life. This is done with the hope that the reader gains a better appreciation of the standpoint from which I speak.

In line with those scholars who have positioned the study of the Caribbean Carnival within the context of diaspora studies, this work examines the Brooklyn Carnival and its relationship to the diasporic concept. In this regard, a general overview of the development and use of the term as a concept for the understanding and study of populations of African descent is undertaken. For this endeavor, I rely primarily on the work of Harris (1993), Skinner (1993), and Cohen (1997). I endeavor to show how posited characteristics associated with the concept of “diaspora” are embodied in the steelpan instrument and the experience that surrounds its growth, development and preparation for performance. In this regard, I argue that the steelband may be envisaged as a metaphor for “diaspora”.

Additionally, relying on conditions set forth by Cohen (1997) for the evaluation of the notion of a Caribbean Diaspora, I examine ethnographic evidence

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1 This undertaking is in no way intended to belittle or underestimate the import of this concept in relation to other groups, such as the Jewish, Indian, Chinese and tohre populations.
gathered in the course of my fieldwork in order to show ways in which the Caribbean community in Brooklyn relates to the concept of “diaspora” through participation in the events that surround the Labor Day festivities. In this regard, I examine ideas expressed in newspaper articles in Brooklyn in the summers of 2006 and 2007. I also look at the artifacts and cultural performances in areas such as dance and religion to show the continuing connections that are made between the spaces of Brooklyn New York, the Caribbean and West Africa in the consolidation of the idea of the Caribbean community in Brooklyn as a diasporic community. In this context reference is made to the longstanding work of anthropologist Melville Herskovits in establishing ideas on the continuation of cultural forms among peoples of African descent in West Africa, the Caribbean and other parts of the New World.

The related concept of “transnationalism” is also given consideration in this work. Referencing the work of Fonner (2001), Basch (2001), Watkins-Owens (2001, and Scher (2003), this project considers ways in which the activity of some leading figures in the Brooklyn Carnival fosters the creation of a Caribbean transnation across the ocean between the Caribbean isles and New York. In so doing, I argue that through the activities of these actors, who lead differing aspects of the Carnival festivities, deeper bonds are consolidated between the communities of the Caribbean and that of Brooklyn.
Further, this work considers the role music plays in the realization of the concept of a Caribbean Diaspora. In particular, specific aspects of the rhythmic practices in the carnival music are examined. For this purpose reference is made to the work of Floyd Jr. (1999), Guilbault (1993), and Rey (2007). These scholars have studied various aspects of the musical practices within in the Caribbean region. Guilbault has expounded on the popular music styles of the French Caribbean isles, such as Haiti, Guadeloupe, and Martinique, as well as Dominica. Rey has written about the influence of Afro-Cuban rhythmic practices on aspects of Cuban art music, while Floyd has given an overarching approach that conceptualizes rhythmic features that provide points of unification among the differing musical styles of the circum-Caribbean region.

This work makes the case that the upsurge in the use of particular related rhythmic patterns in the soca music of Carnival facilitates the cementing of diasporic bonds among the peoples within the Caribbean and those in the Caribbean communities abroad. It engages aspects of rhythm, and the argument is made that the rhythmic practice, as heard in the percussive accompaniment of the carnival music, serves the consolidation of a Caribbean diasporic community in Brooklyn. In particular the rhythm of the music used in the Jab Molassie mas’ portrayal is compared with some of the rhythmic practices that scholars have posited among the African diaspora in the Caribbean and West Africa. Sections of this discourse will rely in part on semiotics, in particular the work of Tagg (1999), and the concept of hegemony as a process of contestation and resistance as explicated by Comaroff
and Comaroff (2006). In this regard, it most be noted that historically Carnival has been a site of conflict and contestation, and continues to be, especially with the various competitive events, like the Parade of Bands, and the Calypso and Steelband competitions. This has been revealed and addressed in the work of scholars such as Liverpool (2001), Rohlehr (1990), Cowley (1996), Steumple (1994), and others. However, while this work touches upon a few aspects of contestation within the Brooklyn Carnival, by and large it is not a major focus.

Finally, I consider the part played by voluntary nonprofit organizations in the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival Parade and the West Indian community. As will be seen, voluntary nonprofit organizations have been of tremendous service to the community, and in the carnival celebrations, from the earliest period of migration into the New York. By use of a case study, I aim to show some of the concrete ways in which voluntary associations contribute to the process of consolidation of a sense of community, and aid in strengthening a Caribbean diasporic community. In conjunction with this, I also examine the three different parades, the Eastern Parkway Labor Day Parade, the J’ouvert celebrations, and the Kiddies Carnival. I argue, a la Bakhtin (1999), that the solidarity experienced with the carnival crowd contributes to a sense of common bonds at the community and diasporic levels. I also argue that the Parkway Parade is, in some respects, a re-interpretation of the historical Big Drum Nation Dance of Grenada and Carriacou. And, the J’ouvert celebrations can be seen in part as creating a space in which a “layering of the past and the present” in carnival music and masking traditions is
observed, and this contributes to the consolidation of the Caribbean diaspora in Brooklyn New York.
CHAPTER 2

NAVIGATING DESIGN

Fieldwork

This project has followed a qualitative research design that guided the approach to collection of data, the type of data sought and collected, the manner in which the data was analyzed, and the ways used to report on the findings and conclusions of this study. In the following pages of this chapter I seek to explicate those aspects of the qualitative design as it relates to my fieldwork and analysis. Qualitative research examines data that is represented through words (narratives, oral history), pictures, and icons. It is inductive, and embraces ethnographic field research, observation, and informal interviews as methods of data gathering. This work aligns itself with this approach.

Additionally, qualitative research is considered to be “subjective, value-laden, and biased” (O’Leary 2004, 99). It is therefore expected that the researcher reveal the ways in which he/she may be related to or biased towards the project. As such, I
present some autoethnographic passages in which personal experiences that may have influenced my perspective and color my lens are enunciated.

Current Philosophical Assumptions of Qualitative Research

The **epistemological** assumptions of the research process relate to the questions about how knowledge is derived and arrived at in the pursuit of the research endeavor. Knowledge derivation in the conduct of a qualitative study requires that researchers try to get as close as possible to the participants being studied. And studies conducted in the field offer an important context for understanding what the participants are saying, as qualitative researchers try to minimize the “distance” and “objective separateness” (Creswell 2007, 18). This epistemological perspective has developed into an important paradigm for ethnomusicologists.

In outlining the types of music that were, in his estimation, the purview of ethnomusicology, Kunst propounded that:

Our science...investigates all tribal and folk music and every kind of non-Western art music. Besides, it studies as well the sociological aspects of music, as the phenomena of musical acculturation. (Kunst 1959, 1, in Merriam 1964, 6)

Merriam further elaborated his opinions on the object of study of the ethnomusicologist. He stated:
Implicit in it is the assumption that ethnomusicology is made up both of the musicological and the ethnological, and that music sound is the result of human behavioral processes that are shaped by the values, attitudes, and beliefs of the people who comprise a particular culture. (Merriam 1964, 6)

And,

Ethnomusicology, then, makes its unique contribution in welding together aspects of the social sciences and aspects of the humanities in such a way that each complements the other... All this is implicit in the definition of ethnomusicology as the study of music in culture. There is no denial of the basic aim, which is to understand; but neither is there an acceptance of a point of view which has long taken ascendancy in ethnomusicology, that the ultimate aim of our discipline is the understanding of music sound alone. (Merriam 1964,7)

From the perspective of these early scholars in the field of ethnomusicology, the study of the musical object cannot be separated from the conditions under which it is produced, or from the views and behavior of its producers. This project endeavors to be faithful to this perspective. In the sections of this chapter that follow, I aim to show that I have been faithful to the epistemological expectations of
a qualitative research design. In that, this research has sought, in the course of fieldwork and throughout the project, to strengthen relationships with the participants in order to enhance knowledge derivation about these participants, their activities, and their overall import and implications to the Brooklyn Carnival, its music and the community from which it springs.

The methodological process and the procedures of qualitative research are generally inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher’s experience in collecting, and analyzing the data. The study is conducted and the inferences made from the material data that is collected in the field during the process of investigation, rather than being reliant on a theory or from the perspectives of the inquirer. Sometimes questions are changed in the middle of the study to better reflect the types of questions needed to understand the research problem, and the data collection strategy maybe modified to cater to new questions and situations. The study follows a path of analyzing the data to develop an increasing detailed knowledge of the topic being studied (Creswell 2007, 19).

When I embarked on my fieldwork study into the Brooklyn Carnival, I did so, having identified this parade as a progeny of the Trinidad Carnival in which the Soca² musicians participate, and I intended to spend the month preceding the parade occupied in this fieldwork activity, engaged in visits to calypso tents, fetes.  

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² This is a style of music that developed out of calypso and is played primarily during carnival celebrations and parties. In its origins it is considered to have incorporated elements of the traditional calypso, American soul, East Indian rhythms, as well as elements of French Caribbean music such as cadence.
(parties), steelband yards and mas\(^3\) camps as they prepared for the festival. As well, it was my intention to attend festival events, in particular the Labor Day Carnival Parade on Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn. I had my preconceived notions of what I wanted to gather. That was principally information directly related to the soca music and the soca musicians. But keeping the study of “music in culture” (Merriam 1964) in mind, I decided on a more open-minded approach to the field and resolved to collect data in so far as it provided information about the various aspects of the carnival activities which impact the music and on which the music has an impact. This altered approach, of seeking to interrogate a wider group of participants than those of my initial primary focus, the soca artistes, revealed to me a wealth of material to which I would not have been exposed if I had maintained that initial focus.

In August 2006 I did not interview a single soca music artiste, but instead was able to view some of the actors who make very significant contributions in different ways to the Brooklyn Carnival. And, I collected some of their accounts about their involvement in the Carnival both in Brooklyn and Trinidad. Thus, I was introduced, in concrete ways, to the transnational links that continue to be forged in the performance of the Labor Festival in Brooklyn. And, my emphasis shifted from merely the soca artistes and their music to:

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\(^3\) Masquerade or mask
- The community organization – The Sesame Flyers, its leader, and their role in the carnival
- A dancer and his wife and how their involvement in the artistic life of Trinidad is carried to the space of Brooklyn, New York
- A steelband leader, who having learnt the art of steel pan playing in the Caribbean, endeavors to pass it on to the youth in Brooklyn and in so doing continues to consolidate transnational linkages.

I did not shift my focus from the soca music entirely, but I widened my gaze. Hence, in returning to Brooklyn in 2007, I resolved to contact and interview personnel with direct experience in the soca music industry, and was able to collect the accounts of one of the foremost contributors to the development of the soca genre, who is still actively involved in its production today. Hence overall, the findings and conclusions reported in this project have followed an inductive path greatly influenced by the nature of the data gathered.

Data Collection

Before proceeding to Brooklyn to collect my field data I attempted to develop some contact with individuals who participated in the Carnival over the years. To facilitate this process I relied on the Internet and visited the website of the West Indian American Day Carnival Association (WIADCA). From this website, I was able to acquire lists of the masquerade bands and the steelbands that participated in the 2005 Labor Day Carnival celebrations. These lists provided contact information for
most of the bands. I then used the telephone in my efforts to contact bandleaders. This course of action was pursued about six months before my venture into Brooklyn.

Through this initial contact process I got tentative agreement from some of the bandleaders that I would be permitted to interview them and record data in relation to their band/organization’s carnival activities. Additionally, I emailed the president of WIADCA, outlined my objectives and requested an interview with her. In reply to my email, she indicated her willingness to assist. This proved to be problematic, in that upon arrival in Brooklyn quite a few of the band contacts listed did not answer my phone calls or reply to the messages I left. Some bands were not participating in the 2006 Carnival and some had moved. I was not able to meet with the association’s president, as she was unavailable since my research was being conducted in the height of preparations for the festival. Nonetheless, a couple of officers did provide assistance and magazines of previous years’ festival from which was I able to gather information about the history, perspective and activities of the WIADCA.
Telephone Conversation/email message:

Hi,

My name is Ken Archer. I am a graduate student at the Ohio State University, where I am pursuing a doctorate in Ethnomusicology. I am particularly interested in analyzing soca music and the role it plays in the Carnival celebrations. As such I am kindly requesting that you permit me to visit your mas’ camp/panyard/calypso tent in order to observe and record activities in which soca music is played, and also to conduct interviews where possible. Please note that any recordings or interviews are for strictly research purposes. I aim to be in Brooklyn in the month (August) preceding and leading up to the Labor Day Festival 2006, and hope to visit your organization then.

My phone no.

Email:
The data I collected was garnered through use of interviews, video recording and, to a lesser extent, audio recording, as well as by observation. Although I had prepared questions for the interviews I conducted, I chose not to follow the script of the text, and decided on a conversation format in which I allowed the participant to speak relatively freely. I asked questions primarily in response to the accounts being related to me. In doing so, the participants were not confined to responding to questions that I had developed to investigate my initial narrow research focus, and they were able to present quite detailed accounts of their involvement in the activities of the carnival celebrations. This allowed me to gain a much wider perspective than I would have if I had stuck to a question-answer format.

The Interview Method

Interviewing includes a wide variety of forms and multiplicity of uses. The most common form involves individual, face-to-face verbal interchange, but it can take the form of face-to-face group interchange, mailed or self-administered questionnaires, and telephone surveys, and it can be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. The use of interviewing to acquire information is so extensive today that is has been said that we live in an interview society. And increasingly, qualitative researchers are realizing that interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering, but are active interactions between people leading to negotiated, contextually based results (Fontana and Frey 2005, 64).
The tradition of interviewing evolved from two trends; namely, the use in clinical diagnosis and counseling, and in psychological testing during WW1. But, Charles Booth is credited as the first to develop a social survey relying on interviews in an 1886 survey of the economic and social conditions of the people of London.

The structured interview aims to capture precise data of a codable nature in order to explain behavior within pre-established categories, while the unstructured interview seeks to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing any a priori categorization that may limit the field of inquiry. In the structured interview the interviewer asks the same series of pre-established questions with limited response categories and there is generally little room for variation. The responses are recorded according to a coding scheme and the interviewer seeks to control the pace of the interview. Interviewers are never to get involved in long explanations of the study, and do not deviate from the introduction, sequence of questions or script. Persons are not allowed to interrupt the interview, or offer opinions. The structured interview calls for the interviewer to be neutral, never interjecting his or her opinion (Fontana and Frey 2005).

The traditional type of unstructured interview goes against the grain of the structured approach and is generally an open-ended, ethnographic (in-depth) interview. Many qualitative researchers differentiate between the in-depth interviewing and participant observation. But the two go hand in hand, and many of the data gathered in participant observation comes from informal interviewing.
Some authors have suggested lengthy, existential one-on-one interviews lasting one or more days (Jack Douglas 1985), others have noted the difference between ethnographic observation and ethnographic interviewing (Spradley 1980), while postmodernists have paid increased attention to the voices of the respondents (Marcus and Fischer 1986).

As well, oral history has gained prominence as a method of collection of data from project participants. It differs from other unstructured interviews in purpose but not methodologically, and captures a variety of forms of life, from common folks talking about their jobs or historical recollections. Creative interviewing (Jack Douglas 1985), the collection of oral reports from members of society, and life histories in which interviewing takes place in multiple sessions over many days, are also embraced under the data collection techniques of the unstructured interview (Fontana and Frey 2005). A significant amount of the material I collected from participants in Brooklyn was obtained via lengthy interviews that occurred over days and involved the development of relationships that have lasted from then to now. The data collected includes material that may be categorized as life histories in which attention was paid to the voice of the participants.

There is the case of Mr. Joseph “Franklyn” Gerald, leader of the Caribbean Youth Panoramics. A member of the Desperadoes Steelband in Trinidad since the 1960s, he was very welcoming to me. And after initial concerns of piracy on the part of members, I was allowed to record portions of the band’s rehearsal on the very
first occasion I visited, the night of August 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2006. This band embraced me and I was invited to a pan jamboree in which the band participated on the next Sunday. I was asked if I would like to play with them, and one person even asked that I arrange a tune for them.

I took up the offer to learn their panorama tune. It was a bit hectic having to combine visits to the various people I had contacted and attending practice, especially since I have not participated in this level of steel band performance for quite some time, particularly with reference to the requirements of dexterity and physical energy in terms of the duration of the practices. But I decided to follow through with this, since it exposed me to more in depth information about the operations of the band and its members. And apart from speaking informally to band elders such as Mr. Hugh, I was able to interview Mr. Franklyn about his involvement in Carnival in both Trinidad and Brooklyn. He also agreed to be interviewed about his religion, but the hectic preparations for the Panorama competition did not permit this before I left. I was also able to attend the panorama competition as a player.

The case of dance instructors Gene Toney and his wife Rosanne is even more evidential of the unstructured interview context and varied material that may be acquired from the application of this technique. When I attended the pan jamboree to which Mr. Franklyn invited me, I observed a couple that I knew to be involved in folk dance in Trinidad. In fact the husband is a highly recognized leader of his own
dance troupe. I seized the opportunity to approach him about the possibility of an interview about his long involvement in the folk culture of Trinidad, and also about the fact that he was performing with the steelband that hosted the jamboree. He agreed and I was invited to a school where he and his wife worked, tutoring youths in Caribbean dance in a camp for the summer.

On my first visit to the school I learnt that camp was part of the programs run by the Sesame Flyers, community organization and masquerade band, in some of the schools in Brooklyn, and that Mr. Munroe, the leader of Sesame Flyers whom I had already interviewed, was in charge. Gene and his wife allowed me to record the rehearsals in which the youths were engaged in preparation for a show that would bring the summer camp to an end. I was then invited to return to record the show in which three Caribbean dances, an African dance, the Bèlè and the Limbo, were performed in full costume.

Subsequently, I was allowed to return for a session in which they were preparing some members of the Sesame Flyers masqueraders for a dance routine to be performed on the road (the carnival parade route) as part of the mas’ band presentation, entitled “Pow Wow” in tribute to the Native American Indian. At this session Gene also took the time to speak to me and elaborate about various Caribbean dance and their origins, and together with the aid of his wife and a long standing friend of East Indian origin, he gave short examples of the type of drumming and singing that are used in accompaniment of the dances. He also
referred to the fact that he was a Spiritual Baptist by faith. These two examples illustrate the great value of the interview methods that take a broader approach than the structured format, and facilitate acquisition of much richer and diverse data.

Fig.2.1 Gene Toney flanked by Rosanne, his wife, and Billy Sammy, perform an example during interview session. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Elements of the unstructured interview

The elements of unstructured interviewing include: gaining access to the setting where one wishes to conduct the interview, developing an understanding of the language and culture of the respondents, deciding on how to present oneself, locating the interview participants, gaining the trust of those participants, establishing a good rapport with them, collecting empirical materials, and equipment and ethics (Fontana and Frey 2005).

**Gaining access:** As I have indicated above, I began the process to gain access to potential interviewees prior to actual entry into Brooklyn through the use of the telephone and email. However this did not necessarily assure me of interviews with those persons with whom I made prior contact. While there, I also called individuals who I learnt were deeply engaged in the carnival preparations and set up interview sessions with them. But being on the site and having an agreement to meet also did not necessarily result in immediate success, in terms of being allowed to conduct an interview. A particular case in point is my attempt to get an interview with the captain of one of Brooklyn’s oldest steelbands. I was given the contact information of the captain by a senior member of the band, whom I met when the band performed at the Queen’s Library in a carnival celebration that was held there for the first time. I called the captain the next day and he readily agreed to meet with me for the interview. He gave me directions to the band’s location and suggested a time that was mutually convenient to both of us.
When I arrived the members and supporters of the band were engaged in preparation of pans, hanging them on racks, painting them etc. I asked to meet the captain, and after some wait I was introduced to him. It was clear that he too was busily involved in the preparations at hand and he told me so. He said that he did not have time to be interviewed then and suggested that I return the next day, earlier in the afternoon when he would be more available. I agreed and asked if I could video tape the preparations that were being done, since I was already there. He gave me the permission. While I did this, some members of the band began rehearsing sections of the musical arrangement they were to present at the Panorama competition. This grew into a larger group and I decided, with the permission of the senior member I had met at Queen’s library, to record some of this rehearsal. I was subsequently stopped from doing this and was told that the musical arranger did not want his music recorded.

The following afternoon, I returned to meet with the captain for the interview. He wasted no time in telling me that he could not grant my request, as he had no time. As I dejectedly left, I overheard a group of four members discussing some past events in steelpan of Trinidad, and I recognize that - based on what was being said – the conversation centered on a band from my village in Trinidad. So, I interjected and inquired whether they were speaking about the said band. One particular individual asked me how I knew that and I told him that I was from that village. He asked who was my family there, since he came from the same village. It turned out that he was a contemporary of my maternal uncles and he knew my
father. In fact his aunt was our next-door neighbor, and one of his younger brothers was the musical arranger of the village steelband at the time. As I set out to leave the captain called out to me and told me that he would give me the interview. Apparently he had found the time. I realized that my being able to relate to one of his members (a long-standing one at that, who voluntarily welded the pan racks), being able to converse about a steelband, and being recognized as a person who was to some extent au courant with the culture and history of the steelband, had afforded me access to obtain the interview.

**Collecting empirical materials: equipment and ethics:** The video and audio recordings were obtained with the permission of the participants, except for the footage that was taken in more public spaces such as the parades. But this was not a simple matter. I quickly learnt that there were issues influencing the response of the participants to my recording of performances and activities. For instance, the issue of piracy - of the researcher being seen as a possible pirate, who is there to steal performance and musical material for personal gain - arose on two occasions as a reason for me not to record.

In one instance it was resolved fairly quickly, but in another I was asked to stop recording. In expressing concerns about piracy and the perception of the researcher as a potential pirate Mr. Franklyn explained that the steelband movement has long suffered from this; from people with tiny or hidden recorders taping performers and the music turning up on recordings, which one accidentally
comes upon, being sold. This issue affected some of my ability to obtain recorded materials. For instance, when I attended the pan jamboree Mr. Franklyn made it clear that I should only record his band as others may object to their music being recorded.

Similarly, the calypsonians at the Sesame Flyers calypso show objected to me recording their songs, which they had not as yet copyrighted. And, I was made to come forward and explain the purpose of my presence to the entire audience, and also face being the butt of jokes by the emcee about the possibility of his picture ending up on the Internet in porn movies, etc. This issue of piracy is reflective of the plight of the carnival artistes who have experienced small remuneration for their endeavors. And they are being increasingly hurt by the technologies of the CDs and DVDs that can be easily mass-produced and sold without consent from, knowledge of and reward to the artistes. It also points to the ethical questions that must be considered by researchers as we seek to collect and utilize data in furtherance of research projects and academic pursuits. And, it requires greater responsibility on the part of researchers that they uphold high ethical standards that are fully cognizant of the plight of those participants on whom they rely as the source of the data that they collect.

Anthony Seeger, as director of the Smithsonian Folkways Archives, worked on establishing ethical practices in relation to the recording, archiving and the
intellectual property rights of the musicians upon whom we rely as ethnomusicologists. He noted that:

Ethnomusicologists have... failed to assist the people they record to protect their own rights to their music, dance, and performing arts. Our failure to act both intellectually and practically in this area can only vitiate our analyses, damage our reputations, and make us suspects in the communities in which we wish to work. (Seeger 1996, 88)

This becomes more imperative since:

The communities we work with are increasingly familiar with commercial recordings and increasingly distrustful of strangers bearing audio and video recorders. (Seeger 1996, 101)

My experience in Brooklyn testifies to this fact, and not only must the plight of those who are directly involved be considered, but these standards must be extended to all who are engaged in the data collection process. Thus, while the materials I collected in Brooklyn have not been produced for commercial purposes, I have made it my duty to furnish some of the participants with copies of DVDs and CDs that I made of their performances and interviews.
Fig.2.2: Members of Pan Sonatas perform at the Sesame Flyers Block Party, Brooklyn 2007. Ken Archer (with camera) and father in the background, upper left hand corner of picture.
Observation

Angrosino and Mays de Pérez (2005) make the point that, while it has been generally assumed that naturalistic observation or fieldwork does not interfere with the people or activities under observation, and the ethnographer’s aim for the achievement of a delicate balance between participation and observation remains the ideal of anthropologists, such balance is difficult to achieve and noninterference is really unattainable. And, the post-modernist critique that emphasizes the importance of understanding the ethnographer’s situation, as part of interpreting the ethnographic product, is important because most current cultural anthropology is carried out in literate societies that are part of global communication and transportation networks, and no longer in the remote, traditional folk societies.

With the passage of time and the technological advances that have been made, one may be at a loss to find societies such as those that may have existed in the time of Malinowski. As such the status and position of the observational researcher needs to be reassessed, and ethnographers can no longer claim to be the sole arbiters of knowledge about societies and cultures they study. Hence, it might be useful to shift from a concentration on observation as a method per se to a perspective that emphasizes observation as a context for interaction among those involved in the research collaboration. Marcus (1997) points out that the result of ethnographic research:
... Is never reducible to a form of knowledge that can be packaged in the monologic voice of the ethnographer alone. (Marcus 1997, 92 in Angrosino and Mays de Perez 2005, 675)

With the research project as a collaborative endeavor, and in the context of such a proposed shift of observation from method to a situated context that facilitates research, the issue of the ability of the researcher to interfere with the people or activities under observation comes into question. This is particularly evident when one considers the different situational settings to which the researcher of festivities such as the Brooklyn and other Carnivals may be exposed.

Three observational situations exist:

1. The parade or block party in which the performances are put on for the spectatorship of the public at large. The researcher/observer in this instance occupies a largely noninvasive space in which there is minimal disturbance of the festivities, and the revelers are clearly unaware of the researcher’s presence as an observer/recorder of the events. In this context I, as the researcher, am no different from the average spectator, many of whom have cameras. This is particularly true for events that take place in the urban settings such as is the case with the Brooklyn Carnival and many of the activities that are held for public spectatorship. And, while it is correct to argue that the recorded materials gathered are limited and hindered by the lens of both the camera and the ethnographer, it is clear in the situation described above that the researcher does not interfere with such events. In these
general public spaces anyone is free to record the events of the Carnival as they unfold. However, in 2007, still cognizant of my experiences the year before, I made it my duty to inquire if I was permitted to record segments of the Sesame Flyers Block Party.

2. Closer up, the individual interview or the confined setting: The interviews conducted with a camera recording device are clearly intrusive; as are those situations in which more intimate groups are aware of the presence of the observer with the recording device. In the case of the interview, especially the lengthy ones, the participant took time from his/her busy schedule (and it is busy at carnival time) to facilitate it. Some made special efforts to present a particular face. For example, one individual changed his shirt to a t-shirt that bore the name of his organization and band, thereby making it clear that he was speaking on behalf of his organization, and also ensuring that the organization's name was visually enshrined in the videotaped material.

Also, there was a participant who wanted to know my questions before hand, and in fact granted a brief interview without prior knowledge of the questions. He then subsequently invited me to forums where I gathered additional data about his involvement and activity, and participated in an extended interview highlighted with numerous artistic examples. I surmised that his initial request for the questions was to ensure that he was prepared to deal with them, so that, in addition to providing me with “proper” information, he would be recorded as being the authoritative figure he is in his field of expertise. Another individual, whom I did not
succeed in interviewing, made this clear to me when he offered an explanation of his reluctance to be interviewed. Thus, these interviews not only intrude into the daily routine of the participants, who adjust their schedules and give of their time, but they also affect the ways in which the participants represent themselves.

3. Less deliberate observation. In contrast with the observational situation described above in which the researcher deliberately sets out to observe and record data, there is the situation in which impromptu observations are made. These are not recorded on a device but mentally noted at the moment of occurrence. The instance, discussed earlier, where I was granted an interview following the participant’s initial refusal is a case in point. He only agreed to facilitate the interview after observing that I shared some things in common with one of the longstanding members of his band, who came from the same village in Trinidad as I. This example also indicates that the researcher is not the only one engaged in observation, but he/she is often the observed. And, one’s deportment during the research endeavor may significantly influence the type and quality of data gathered. These three differing observational contexts clearly present distinctive interaction situations to the researcher, and it behooves one to consider each separately in making analysis of one’s activity in the ethnographic situation and in the course of analyzing of the collected data.
Data Analysis

Creswell (2007) acknowledges that inductive data analysis in which researchers build their patterns, categories, and themes from the material data gathered is generally practiced in qualitative inquiry. Data is organized into more abstract units of information, and this involves working back and forth between the themes and the database until a comprehensive set of themes is established (Creswell 2007, 37). In keeping with the expectations of a qualitative research design, I pursue an inductive approach to data analysis in this study.

Video analysis

The vast majority of my fieldwork data collected on the Brooklyn Carnival consists of video recordings. These include interviews, footage of rehearsals, and the parade of the bands. In analysis of this body of material, footage has been cut into shorter clips that highlight a specific point or illustrate a particular activity or practice. This was done with both the videos of the parade in which the visual images tell the story, as well as with the spoken words of the videotaped interviews. These clips serve as the evidential data to support the various claims made and conclusions arrived at, and are additionally supported by still pictures that supplement the evidential data. Use has been made of the capabilities of the movie software programs that allow one to extract still photographs from the videos that illustrate different aspects of the issue of “diaspora.” Some relate to the question of a
“Caribbean cultural diaspora” and the concept of “transnationlism,” others relate to the concept of an “African Diaspora.”

Dance

In his seminal article on music and dance, Anthony Seeger discussed the close relationship of music and dance, and postulates that if the video recorder was invented at the time Edison invented the audio recording machine, ethnomusicologists would have paid much more attention to the dance that accompanied much of the singing of the Native American and others, who served as the subjects of the ethnographic work of early cultural anthropologists and comparative musicologists (Seeger 1994). This study will highlight a few Caribbean dances and the work and cultural wherewithal of a respected dancer choreographer. This will be supported by the use of video clips as well as by notation. The Ohio State University Dance Department is recognized for its work in the development of the system of dance notation, Labanotation, and a section of the Dance Notation Bureau exists at the university. And, I took one of the dance notation courses offered in order to facilitate my ability to analyze and represent the Caribbean dances as encountered in Brooklyn.

Music

As an ethnomusicological project this study must of necessity bring its focus to bear on the sound elements of that accompany the preparations for, and the performance of the festival. In so doing, video and audio clips are examined to
present evidential material and they are accompanied by annotated examples where this author so desires. This material is analyzed with regard to the social context – the performance of carnival celebrations - within which the music is performed, and its implications for the revelers and onlookers for whose consumption it is played. Thus, by organizing the fieldwork data in this manner I aim to bolster the arguments made to support the claims of the study. In consideration of the study of music and its relation to culture by ethnomusicologists, Nettl notes that:

> Studying music in culture would imply a holistic view of culture as an organic unit, and descriptively assigning to music a unitary role, ascertained by field research. (Nettl 1983, 131)

Thus, apart from the consideration of aspects of the sound elements, this study also considers some of the individuals who are involved in the Carnival and their lives as musicians and artistes. It examines some of their opinions on aspects of their activities, music, and performances in which they engage. It presents some of the artistic wherewithal and experience of these individuals, and seeks to illustrate how their lives are intertwined into that of the overall community.

Nettl observes that some scholars may be more interested in the “cultural side of things,” while others are interested in the study of “musical matters” (Nettl 1983, 131). It can be said that this work is aligned with the former, in that emphasis is placed on many facets of activities within the Caribbean community and the carnival festivities. And, aspects of the musical sound itself, in particular rhythmic aspects,
are considered in relation to the consolidation of a sense of community. In this regard, it may be said that this study takes a structural-functionalist approach. About this approach, Nettl notes that:

...Culture is like a human or animal organism, with parts or organs interrelating and contributing something to the whole. The interrelationships and interdependence of organs are paralleled by the same kinds of relationships among the domains of culture. Music is one of these, and ... makes a single main contribution and others of a less crucial nature. (Nettl 1983, 137)

This project aligns itself with this perspective in that it contends that the carnival music, along with other facets of the Carnival, makes a main contribution by facilitating the development of a common sense of diaspora among the Caribbean people in Brooklyn.

Narrative

Creswell (2007) points out that the term “narrative” might be assigned to any text of discourse or it might be used within the context of a mode of inquiry in qualitative research, with a specific focus on stories told by individuals. Narrative is both a method and the phenomenon of study, and as a method it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals.

As noted previously, a major part of the mode of data collection for this project consists of the interviews in which the personal experiences and history of
individuals in relation to carnival, and their specific area of artistic endeavor were sought. Researchers have taken different approaches in the use and analysis of such data, and in this study the accounts are used for “analysis of narratives” (Polkinghorne 1995) in order to discern the ways in which they speak to, and about, common themes that impact on the performance of the activities in the Brooklyn and the Caribbean Carnival in general. Across stories, these themes may be used as evidence to bolster claims or reveal contradictions and conflicts that arise in the realization of the annual festivities. In addition, portions of this study assume the form of biographical study in which I write about the personal life experiences of individuals, in relation to their areas of artistic endeavor and the carnival celebrations. Thus narratives as a mode of collection of data are used as evidential material, as well as to give voice to the individuals, who volunteered as participants in this study, to have their stories told.

This last point calls into focus the ontological aspect of qualitative research that relates to the nature of reality and its characteristics. Qualitative researchers generally embrace the idea of multiple realities, and conduct studies with the intent of reporting these multiple realities. The evidence of multiple realities includes the use of multiple quotes based on the actual words of different individuals, and presenting different perspectives from individuals (Creswell 2007, 16-18). And it is in this context that this study foregrounds the experiences, activities, knowledge and perspectives of the individuals, who generously participated in the project. The import of their accounts in this work, their contribution to a deeper insight into the
nature of these Carnival festivals, the role of the music, and that of the differing artistes in its performance cannot be underestimated.

The **axiological** assumption of the researcher brings values to the study, and qualitative researchers like to make those values explicit. They admit the value-laden nature of the information gathered from the field, and position themselves in the study. The researcher's presence may be apparent in the text, in the case of biography, and the author admits that the stories voiced represent an interpretation and presentation of the author as much as the subject of the study (Creswell 2007, 18). This axiological assumption of the qualitative researcher is fully revealed in the move to autoethnography, the placing of the “self” in fieldwork studies, that has gained currency in the last couple of decades. This is the principle of reflexivity in which one recognizes that the self, including the cultural baggage that the ethnographer brings to the field, helps shape the ethnographic encounter (Caplan 1994, 83; in Stoeltje et al 1999).

For instance, Abu-Lughod (1990) in her exploration of the question has argued that:

…both feminist and halfie\(^4\) ethnography are practices that could shake up the paradigm of anthropology itself by showing us that we are always part of what we study and we always stand in definite relations to it . . . . Feminist ethnographies . . . can also make clear our relationships, since it is a pretense

\(^4\) A person whose “national or cultural identity is mixed by virtue of migration, overseas education, or parentage” (Abu-Lughod 2006:466).
to think that we do not live in one interconnected world. (Abu-Lughod 1990, 27; in Stoeltje et al 1999)

For the researchers engaged in ethnographic study it is important to realize that there is much to be gained from the research endeavor when the self has been integrated into the research model, and its complexity and related cultural practices recognized, because it is the self that enters into negotiations with participants in the study, and ultimately accounts for the data, the representations, and the theoretical interpretation of the ethnographic work (Stoeltje et al 1999). In a useful critique of reflexivity, Watson (1987) notes that for ethnomethodologists reflexivity is a property of accounts, which are intentional communications that describe features of a situation, and in the provision of these accounts researchers not only describe a situation, but also embed themselves in it. In his opinion, an adequate display of reflexivity would entail, that the writer be aware of techniques used by others to establish their authority and achieve the appearance of a separation between their objects of study and their methods of studying them. In addition, the writer must be aware that he is probably using the identical methods for identical purposes, and should ensure that his readers are fully and continuously alerted to these. However, the practice of reflexivity could have the consequence of crowding out other things, and ethnography that takes reflexivity seriously, one in which the researcher’s personal story prominently stands out, may call into question the author’s authority and undermine the validity of the evidence presented (Watson 1987).
Thus, in the section that follows I endeavor to position myself in relation to the subject matter of my study and the participants with whom I interacted in the course of pursuit of this study. It must be explicated that this is being done primarily to reveal the ways in which I may have developed notions and biases about the subject, and the principal theoretical paradigms that I have held, prior to venturing into more in-depth scholarly study of the subject. It is also my aim to illustrate to the reader that I have been intimately connected to aspects of the subject matter of this project. For instance, it will be seen that I have been an active participant in carnival activities over the past three decades, and that I have had a relationship to Brooklyn and experiences of the Brooklyn Carnival prior to my embarking on this endeavor. And, I am of the view that this experience with Brooklyn made it possible for me to establish the contacts and acquire the data I collected in a relatively short period of time. Apart from this chapter then, I will desist from “embedding” myself in the presentation of materials gathered in the course of this research enterprise, except of course where conclusions and interpretations are made on my part, as I endeavor to present the voices of the participants.
Positioning Self

Earliest memories of carnival

My mother, her first cousin – Sis, and I are standing on the sidewalk in front of Roxy Cinema at the roundabout; this is either carnival Monday or Tuesday. Looking west towards the police barracks, there is a large crowd that occupies the entire roadway, and there is the banner of an approaching steelband. It says “Esso Tripoli.”

It was the practice of my mother to visit her first cousin – Sis- around carnival time, as well as Christmas. Sis, the daughter of my mother’s maternal aunt, lived with her husband on Kelly Kenny St. in Woodbrook, Port of Spain. This was an ideal location during the days of carnival because it made viewing the bands very accessible, since many of the steelbands and mas’ bands came from that area of west Port of Spain.

I am walking along Duke St. Port of Spain on a Carnival Tuesday in the company of my mother and my aunt of the same age as I. We are proceeding in westerly direction towards Victoria Square. My aunt and I are fascinated with a fancy sailor, who carries a huge headpiece that depicts a greatly oversized scorpion. We are so taken up with this costume that we stand watching while my mother and whomsoever in her company walks along. We eventually run to catch up in fear of being lost in the carnival crowds.
I believe that was the year that George Bailey brought out his band “Robin Hood and His Merry Men.” I remember that a very good family friend, Cummings, played mas’ in a section of this band, and we viewed the band as it paraded pass Victoria Sq. These events all occurred in my early childhood and took place prior to my mother leaving for the United States in 1966.

I also remember being taken together with my young aunt, to view mas’ on Carnival Tuesday by my maternal grandmother. This could have been in 1968. We went to Henry St. at the home of relatives of the Fungs, a Chinese family that lived in Cantaro and for whom my grandmother worked occasionally, either in their shop or their home. We stood along their fence on Henry St., Port of Spain and looked at the bands pass by on their way to the grand savannah, the main judging point of the parade. I remember seeing the band George Bailey’s “Kings Go Forth” as it paraded by. And the sound of the brass band accompaniment intrigued me as they broke into – what I later learnt was called - an F Jam.

Of carnival in the village, I remember looking forward to Carnival Monday morning, J’ouvert morning, with my aunt. We anxiously anticipated the different types of mas’ played by individuals and small groups. Particularly, we expected the ole mas’ portrayed by children, who attempted to get some pennies for their portrayals as they passed by people’s yards. We also looked forward to the different devil mas’, the Jab Jab and the Jab Molassie. We feared these, the Jab Jab in their fancy costumes with the long whips that they cracked on the streets and each other;
and the Jab Molassie, all blackened with tar, with their horns, tails and whips accompanied by the beating on the biscuit tins. I also loved to see and hear the Midnight Robber that was played by two members in the village at that time—namely, Malcolm Prosper (who lived at our cousins) and a gentleman I knew as Tolos. Viewing them with fear also, I loved how they delivered their speeches and twirled their guns, dressed in the black cowboy-like outfits with long black capes and large broad-rim hats.

Carnival Monday in Cantaro in those days was also graced by a steelband, which was founded and run by a cousin of ours, Joe Lendore. They would come out on the afternoon and provide music for the villagers’ entertainment. I remember it being said that this band, Cross Winds, won the first steelband competition organized by the steelband association in the 1950s. Attempting to make our own pans, Ounsi, my mother’s brother burnt pans (5 lb Fern leaf milk tins) in the yard. Not being familiar with how the marking of the notes was done, we bored holes with a nail to separate the notes (totally unrelated to us, this became a noted innovation in the 1980-90s, of a tuner in Port of Spain). We hung the pans around our necks and Ounsi took my aunt and I into the village on Monday afternoon.

More Recent Memories

Following the 1970 uprising, in 1971, dressed in a large dashiki and jeans I accompanied my aunt to the bleachers in the savannah to see mas’. The band of George Bailey, “Bright Africa”, his last before his death, impressed me a lot as the
different sections that represented different ethnic groups crossed the stage. Then in 1973, I went to Carnival by myself for the first time. It was the year of Kitchener’s *Rainorama*, and how I jumped among the throngs of revelers who were in glee on the streets every time the music bands struck up this popular Road March. The next year I went alone again and was filled with similar joy, this time to the strains of the Road March of that year, Winston Bailey The Shadow’s *Bassman*.

I later made my entrance into Carnival as a musician when in 1978 I joined the steelband Turban Starland, which hailed from the town of Tunapuna in east Trinidad. I played the tenor (4) bass, and the band performed Kitchener’s *Social Dora* in the Panorama competition. We did not place high but the experience of that Panorama was exhilarating. In the aftermath of that Panorama, Starland folded and a few of us, myself included, went on to form the band Tunapuna All Stars that is still in existence today. And while they still participate in Panorama, the band currently performs mainly songs of the Indian diaspora for Hindu functions. Back in those days of 1979 and the early 80s, performing in the Panorama competition was not one of our goals. We were very much involved with the Carnival in Tunapuna, and we would play our pans the entire day on both days of the festivals, until the police told us to stop nearing the hour of midnight. In addition, in the early 1980s Tunapuna All Stars performed on Sunday mornings at the poolside of the Holiday Inn in Port of Spain, and I played tenor pan with the band, both on the road and on such occasions. I later played for a couple years with the Tropical Angel Harps, a band that is based in the village of Enterprise in central Trinidad.
It was during this period that I joined the People’s Cultural Association (PCA) and my participation in Carnival celebrations came to include performance of the calypso art form. I got my introduction to the performance world of calypso music as a member of PCA, and being asked by Brian Honore to accompany him on the acoustic guitar as he went to different auditions for the various calypso tents. These auditions usually begun in the month of December as the tents go about finalizing their casts of performers for the upcoming Carnival season. Brian and many other calypsonians would participate in these auditions in the hope of being selected. This was during the 1980s, and during that period many of the calypsonians would visit the headquarters of the National Joint Action Committee who hosted the Young Kings Calypso Competition, which was exceedingly popular at the time. Brian was among those aspiring and I would accompany him at these auditions. He also sometimes took me along when he visited the famous Frankie Francis, now deceased saxophonist and arranger of calypso and dance band music in Trinidad, at his place on Prince Street in Port of Spain. He wrote the scores for Brian (and indeed numerous other calypsonians) at the time. And it is through this working association with Brian that my admiration and respect for him and his work as a performing artiste grew. Thus I was moved to pen the following in his honor at the occurrence of his death in 2005.
In Memory of a Dear Comrade and Friend

It is with the deepest regrets that I ‘pen” this. We are all aware of the tremendous work Brian did and the sterling contribution he has made in upholding the richest cultural traditions of our beloved country and people. I will take the opportunity here to speak of the impact he had on me and the memories that live on, and for which I am eternally grateful.

“Fatboy” and I, both attended Eastern Boys’ Gov’t. He being a few classes ahead of me, I did not know him then. But with his mother and my aunt being teachers in the school, I would regularly hear reference to Ms. Honore’s son. Many moons passed and one evening in Daaga Hall I sat observing a People’s Cultural Movement rehearsal and heard the following from the Commentor:

Bloody Tuesday will live in the memory
of every oppressed worker in this country
Yes we march for peace, for justice and bread
And all we get in return was baton instead
We kneel and we pray, just like traitor Panday say
But the police they beat we up and chase we away
The brutality of the police was really dread
But I believe that the Knock some sense in we head

He then rehearsed another song that went as follows:

So they want to hang Kirkland Paul and Michael Lewis
For taking up arms against the imperialists
But if they feel that repression
could hold back this great revolution
tell them for me they are surely wrong
they doh know they cah see
that my people was born to be free
Thousands more to come
And I was hooked. I had no clue at the time that we would work together and he would make a big impact in my life. Nonetheless, a few more moons passed and I was in tow behind “Fatboy” strumming my chu ku kee chu ku. He took me to auditions by Jazzy place on the corner of Edward and Tragrete; NCC auditions on Frederick St (where the Passport office is now), Young King auditions. He had a gig at the Carnival village where I met Sprang performing a Pierrot. Yes through “FatBoy”, I met royalty, up the UWI school of education when he, Short Pants, and Weston Rawlins entertained the students; in the Prince St. apartment of the great Frankie who scored his calypso for the tent; at Coral Studies in the company of Frankie, Roy Cape, Dennis Wilkinson, Colin Lucas, Ryan Romany, Bassie; or in his home where he played host the likes of Zhivago, Contender and others engaged in an evening of extempo. Thank you for those memories “FatBoy”.

They in no small measure stoke the cultural fire that has led me to walk the path I have for the past twenty-five years. Most of all I thank you for allowing me to enter into your world as a composer and lyricist. I deeply cherish sitting under Mr. Alleyne’s house working on some chords to:

I used to wait all day to see Strasser
Play some real mas in the Savanah
Whey mih carnival gone, Whey mih carnival gone
Or in the library in Malick:
I come back again to rule Port of Spain and drive them young people mad
Mister Robber man, We done know yuh plan
Or on Taitt St:
Ah meet a robber in town, with a devilish frown, and a big, big dish on he back.

Thank you “FatBoy”, for keeping me in tow and for all the irreplaceable memories.

Long, long will live the works of Commentor
That fierce midnight robber,
who stood in defense of our culture
Long, Long .................
Upholder of our lofty Traditions
‘gainst imperialist cultural aggression
Halt! Drop your keys and bow your knees!

May he rest in peace.
The People’s Cultural Association is now defunct. It was a continuation of the aforementioned People’s Cultural Movement, and I was a performing member for the period of a decade plus, from around 1980 – 92. I played guitar and pan, sang and composed. As an organization the PCA set as its goal, the preservation and uplift of the people’s culture. This referred to the performance traditions of the groups that were historically oppressed in Trinidad and Tobago, primarily the working people of African and Indian descent. To fulfill this lofty aim the group engaged in the research aimed at unearthing and better understanding these traditions. Performance, particularly of calypso, folk songs, workers’ songs, at strike camps, was its main activity. And, it also became involved in mas’, producing a children’s band in the late 1980s. Collaboration with other artistes, including those of the Indian community, for example the now deceased Ken Parmasad, was another important activity in which it engaged, as well as composition of songs and poems that projected the ideals of the association.

The ideological perspective of the group favored the critical theory perspective that saw the society as being composed of different classes, the dominant and the dominated; the dominated being historically the working people and poor, and the dominant, the upper classes, rich and business-property owning classes. It must be noted that these were not necessarily of a particular race or hue, although there is historical precedence for one to assess these from the standpoint
of racial origin, the property owning classes being historically of European origin
and later of Syrian Lebanese extraction. Hence the materials performed, composed
and interpreted by the group reflected this critical perspective. The following are
excerpts of some of the songs that reveal this perspective in their lyrical content.
The songs of deceased Commentor (Brian Honore) are illustrative in this regard.

**Thousands More to Come** and **Bloody Tuesday** are both quoted in part
above. The former speaks about youth who took to arms in what they saw as their
fight against the imperialists’ domination of Trinidad and Tobago. Some of them lost
their lives and some were tried and sentenced to death for treason. The second song
refers to Tuesday 14th, February 1975, when police in riot gear broke up a protest
march by workers in south Trinidad.

**Children of Soweto** (ca. 1979): This is a calypso that is dedicated to the youth
of Soweto, South Africa, who became the torchbearers and focal point in the struggle
of the South African people against the system of apartheid that was existed at the
time. The song is also instructive of the fact that segments of the population in
Trinidad acted in support of this movement.

> Many people have fought and died
> Many people are gone
> But down there in South Africa
> The racist regime hangs on
Some day soon it all must stop
We know apartheid must go
And they would have to give account to the children of Soweto

So listen to the cries of the great children
We go bring them down we go blow them down
We go be comin’ in twenty thousand by ten
We go bring them down we go blow them down
Mother Africa we got to defend
We go bring them down we go blow them down
Leh we ben’ the anvil on them
We go bring them down we go blow them down

**Satellite Robber** (ca.1986): This calypso takes a stance against cultural imperialist aggression. In particular, it refers to the advent of mass satellite television into Trinidad in the mid 1980s as an eventuality that presented US television shows to the detriment of local programs.

*Ah meet a robber in town with a devilish frown and a big big dish on he back
He tell me drop on your knees, surrender your keys and get ready for my attack
He say, I bring a dish to fulfill my wish of cultural subversion
To dazzle your eyes till you conceptualize that you belong to Uncle Sam*
Call toll free join the US army

You have no show time for Holly B

When we dishing the Dynasty

I am your satellite robber your receiver deceiver

What you cannot tote you will drag

I'm here to rip out your heart, tear your culture apart

Till you worship the Yankee flag

Solid Gold

**Whey mih Carnival Gone (ca. 1987):** A calypso that laments the disappearance of traditional masquerade characters and players from the Carnival

*I used to wait all day to see Strasser*

*Play some real mas in the Savanah*

*Whey mih carnival gone, Whey mih carnival gone*

*Used to bounce up Charles Peace the robber*

*And some moko jumbie down by Green Corner*

*Whey mih Carnival gone, Whey mih Carnival gone*

*So ah play fast last j’ouvert morning*

*Ah went looking for mas’ in town*

*Ah search from dawn until evening*
There was no old mas’ to be found

Searching everywhere

Independence Square

I aint see a’ old time character there

Not a sailor band or some wild Indian

And Monday mas’ used to be so much fun

Now is only razzle dazzle up and down the town

Tell mih whey long time carnival gone

Ken Parmasad’s Children of Indenture (ca.1986): This song, a composition of the late Ken Parmasad, honors the East Indian population of Trinidad and the Caribbean, who came as indentured laborers to work on the sugarcane plantations in the aftermath of the Emancipation of the enslaved Africans. These descendants of the indentured continue in the footsteps of their forefathers, still hosting celebrations such as Divali, the festival of lights, annually.

Children of Indenture, Children of the light

Facing many hardships, survive the fiercest fight

Honoring our parents who stood against the storms
Proudly in their footsteps we’ll forge a brighter dawn

Stand Brave, Stand Bold (ca.1982): A calypso that served as the theme song of the PCA, a pledge to stand in defense of cultural traditions of the people.

Since long ago we have shown what great warriors we are
Many battles we waged were in defense of our culture
Fighting since the days of slavery
We fought with all our might
Fearlessly with our bois sticks
We repulse the attacks of the rich
So Stand brave, stand bold
In defense of our culture
Our fighting traditions we must uphold
So Stand Brave and bold

These songs and materials reveal a perspective that places the “people’s culture,” their traditions in the context of class conflict; in the context of struggle against the impositions of the oppressing classes. It reveals the critical perspective of the People’s Cultural Association, and, to large measure my participation in the activities of the association has served greatly to shape me, and my perspective to which I continue to hold on steadfastly.
It is through my association with PCA and in particular, deceased Brian Honore, that I first became aware of the Ujaama Dance Company and its leader Gene Toney. Brian was the manager of the Soul City Netball team (ca. 1981), and he invited me to accompany him on the guitar at a function in which the team (he as well) was performing at the National Stadium. The team performed a number of traditional folk dances. Soul City later hosted a concert in which I was again invited by Brian to participate at the South East Port of Spain Secondary School. I remember the members of the team performing dances such as the Joropo, the Bélé, and the Pique. Gene Toney was responsible for the tuition of the dancers (the members of Soul City), and his wife of today was a member of the team at that time. So having met this exceedingly resourceful couple during my research in Brooklyn, I am forced to reaffirm the links that my current research endeavors have to my past activity as a member of the People's Cultural Association.

My Relation to Brooklyn

My connection to Brooklyn started in my early childhood with my mother's migration to the USA, where she lived in Brooklyn for 30 odd years. Her stay would often be interrupted by regular visits to her native Trinidad, visits that sometimes lasted for several months before she returned abroad.
As well, my father migrated to the St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands a year after my mother, and from there he eventually moved to Brooklyn. In both the US Virgin Islands and New York he, for a while, became actively involved in the sporting and cultural life. In St. Thomas he sang with a scratch band, Spaghetti and the Meatballs, and he also played with a steelband. In Brooklyn, along with others who had migrated from Cantaro Village, Santa Cruz, he reconstituted the soccer team Brazilians, and they participated in the soccer tournaments organized among Caribbean immigrants in Brooklyn in the early 1970s. And he once again became involved as a singer with a band.
Fig. 2.4: The band Ebonema; my father is to the extreme left. Immediately behind him is Joe Lendore, pan tuner and player and a cousin of my mother. Holding the steelpan in front is Lennard Guerra, the musical director of the band, the nephew of my maternal grandfather (Family picture taken Brooklyn 1975)
Other family members, in particular two of my maternal aunts eventually migrated to New York. My first visits to Brooklyn came while still a student at the University of the West Indies, where I was at the time pursuing a degree in Agriculture. During this first visit I stayed in the apartment in which my mother and her sisters lived. This was located on Rutland Road, Brooklyn, between Nostrand and New York Avenues. My father at that time lived in Carnasie on Flat Lands.
My first Labor Day Carnival Parade came in 1990 when I visited my father during the summer vacation break from my duties as a secondary school teacher in Trinidad. Daddy had moved and he now lived on Green Avenue, between Nostrand and Bedford, in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn. I remember meeting Nicole Greaves, a former student of the secondary school at which I taught, on the parkway. At the time she was the lead singer with the now defunct Volts Express, a band from south Trinidad. There were at the time a proliferation of Trinidadian soca bands that accompanied the masquerade bands on the Parkway, including bands such Sound Revolution, Charlie’s Roots, Atlantik and others. Among the things that struck me during this first experience of the Labor Day Carnival Parade was that fact that the actual costume parade was preceded by a parade of politicians and official figures such as the Mayor of New York. Also the massive crowd that attended the celebration left a lasting impression on my mind, not that large crowds do not attend carnival celebrations in Trinidad, but there are never numbers of people of that magnitude.

Returning to the New York Tri-state area to pursue graduate studies in music in 1992, I had the opportunity to participate in and observe the Brooklyn Carnival. Firstly, during my stay abroad at that time, I resided in the City of East Orange, New Jersey and was privileged to witness the East Orange Carnival in the summers of 1993-1996. I also had the opportunity to meet the woman responsible for the initiation of that Carnival, a Trinidadian of Chinese and African extraction. During my stay in East Orange I observed that bands of Trinidad participated in providing
music for the masquerade; bands such as Trafik, Atlantik and JMC Trivini, a band in which most of the members are Indo-Trinidadians. As well, I had the opportunity to visit one the mas’ camps and noticed that one of the leading bandleaders, Albert Bailey, the brother of the late George Bailey, was the costume designer and craftsman there. Similarly, at a party hosted by the Pan Jersey Steel Orchestra in 1995, there were live performances by top Trinidad soca artistes, Colin Lucas and Iwer George. In addition steelbands from the Brooklyn area, Despers USA for example, took part in this Carnival across the river in “Jersey.” Thus, although the East Orange Carnival in no way matched the throngs of people who attend the Brooklyn Labor Day festival, it mirrored that festival in terms of being a ground on which Trinidadians and West Indians as a whole congregated to participate in the masquerade celebrations.

In the years 1994-1996, I also visited the Brooklyn Carnival and noticed that by and large the parade had not changed, in that the music bands were largely from Trinidad, with the exception of a few Haitian and Barbadian bands. The massive attendance continued and in fact seemed to have increased compared to my first experience in 1990. The mayor and other politicians still led the parade. But, what struck me was the increase in the number of flags of the different island nations of the Caribbean. And particularly in 1995, this seemed to be related to and fuelled by the most popular hit song of Ronnie McIntosh and the band Massive Shandileer, “Ah Come Back Home” in which Ronnie, in his charismatic fashion, would strike up his question and answer chanting: “Anybody from Guyana: Anybody from Antigua;
Anybody from Jamaica etc.” And the spectators and revelers alike would not hesitate to respond with their cheers and flags as their respective island states were identified.

**Inside/ Outsider**

Because of my long involvement with Carnival, first as a child and then as an active performer/participant, one may be tempted to position me as an insider to the culture of Carnival and its performance, and I may be rightfully designated to be an indigenous researcher. However, this is only partially true for:

With his specific instruments and operational definitions, the researcher makes foray into both the known and unknown regions. Consequently, what happens within this moment of experimentation and observation is actually a reconciliation of the tension that exists between what is already known and the unknown. The nature of the tension also depends upon the degree to which the researcher is familiar with his object of study, the nature of the object, itself, and the appropriateness of theoretical package... The indigenous researcher does not, therefore, hold any privileged status, as evident from the argument above. (Avorgbedor 1986, 47-48)

As I set out to gather the accounts of those individuals who volunteered to participate in my study, I in fact set out to discover the unknown, notwithstanding my previous interactions with Carnival festivities. This is so because of the fact that I sought to collect the personal account of each individual’s experience and history in
relation to their involvement with the Carnival and the festival arts. And, while there are many matters of general interests of which the participants and I may have shared common knowledge, there is no way that I, as a presumed insider, could have been privy to the details of their personal histories, as well as to their perspectives on the particular areas of expertise.

For example, while I had general information about the role and importance of figures such as Rudolph Charles and Clive Bradley to the history of the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra and the history of steel pan music in general, I could only garner intricate details of their involvement and contributions from someone as Mr. Franklyn, who is the real insider in this regard, he having lived and performed with these gentlemen. The same can be said of the information that I collected from other participants such as the dancer Gene Toney, and all the others who gave of their time to contribute to this project. While there remain many “unknowns,” as there will always be, these “insiders” aided me significantly with my “foray into the ‘known’ and the ‘unknown’ regions,” as it relates to their personal experiences with Carnival in general and the Brooklyn Carnival in particular.

Further, as I seek to apply my theoretical lens to the analysis of the data collected on the basis of academic training, I position myself as an insider in the intellectual life of academia. In so doing I shed the cloak of “culture-bearer” and seek to project

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5 Rudolph Charles is a deceased leader of the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra of Trinidad.
6 Clive Bradley is a deceased musician and arranger of steelband music.
the ideals and characteristics of the academic socio-intellectual world (Avorgbedor 1986, 50).
DIASPORA AND CARNIVAL ACTORS

Transnational Actors in the Brooklyn Carnival

Brooklyn Mas
Leh me tell yuh someting, about
Labor Day in Brooklyn
Everybody jumpin’
Labor Day in Brooklyn
All dem West Indian jumpin’ up like mad
Jus’ like a carnival day here in Trinidad
De Yankees an’ all listenin’ to the steelban’ beat
An’ rollin’ in canal jus’ like on Charlotte Street

An dey bawlin’, mas mas play mas
Mas in yuh mas, play mas
Even doh ah feelin’ home sick

Calypso sung by calypsonian Slinger Francisco – The Mighty Sparrow – 1969. The term “mas” is used in Trinidad to represent mask or masquerade, so Brooklyn mas’ means Brooklyn masquerade or Carnival.
Even doh ah tired roam
Jus’ gih mih de calypso music
Brooklyn is mih home

Night Time in Manhattan
Tings start to happen
When de boat ride over
All man ha to run for cover
20 woman to one man in New York
An’ ah man like a piece a gol’ anywhere he walk
When yuh see dem comin’ yuh better run away quick
Oderwise you go ha to beat dem orf wit a stick

Early in September
A time to remember
When dey say Labor Day
Dat is New York j’ouvert
Ah had a fungi and fish to eat up by Myra
An’ 116th St. in Harlem on Fire

You could be from St. Clair or John John
In New York all ah dat done
It ain’t have no who is who
New York equalize you
Bajan, Grenadian, Jamaican, toute moon
Drinking dey rum, beatin’ dey bottle and spoon
Nobody could watch me and honestly say
Dat dey doh like to be in Brooklyn for Labor Day

Fig.3.1 Trinidadian restaurant on Church Ave, Brooklyn New York (Photograph by Ken Archer 2007)
In his calypso in tribute to Brooklyn mas’ (1969), Slinger Franscisco, The Mighty Sparrow raises a number of issues that continue to resonate in discussions of the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival, and the West Indian Community that spawned the New York Carnival celebrations. The calypso makes comparisons between the activities in the Labor Day festival and those of the carnivals in the Caribbean – Trinidad in particular. Sparrow comments on the availability of the Caribbean cuisine in New York, and refers to Harlem, the site where the West Indian Carnival originated in the American metropolis. As well, he refers to the separation and insularity created in the Caribbean by class and country, but which is largely nullified in the Brooklyn context where all are West Indians or Caribbean people. He says that even if you came from St. Clair or John John (high class and lower class neighborhoods in Trinidad, respectively), in Brooklyn all of that is gone, and irrespective of your country of origin in the Caribbean, New York equalizes you. Given all of this, the similarity of the festivity to those of the Caribbean, the availability of the food, the unity that abounds – even though one is homesick – Brooklyn is the ideal substitute, “Brooklyn is mih home.” Indeed since 1969, thousands of West Indian immigrants have made Brooklyn, and the New York metropolis at large, their home. And in this chapter it will be shown that the West Indian community of New York maintains tenacious bonds with the Caribbean island nations from which they came, while consolidating itself in the North American metropolis.
Since the time of the recording of this calypso, much has been written about Brooklyn and other similar Carnival celebrations in North America and Europe; and their implications for and connections with the issues of diaspora, transnationalism and globalization. Scher notes that the rise of the Trinidad-style Carnival in Brooklyn provides an excellent opportunity for observing how cultural forms and the meanings that surround them may change in a diasporic situation (Scher 2003). Further, Cohen observes that the social behavior of Caribbean people in their places of sojourn and settlement provides telling evidence of the creation of a cultural diaspora. He suggests that sustained empirical work needs to be done on this issue, in order to answer some of the pertinent questions. How did the Caribbean carnival evolve into a circuit, linking the archipelago to the metropolitan cities of New York, Toronto, London and elsewhere? Who were the principal actors and social organizations involved? How were the enterprises financed? What was the role of the Caribbean governments in cementing these ties (Cohen 1997)? In this chapter I seek to answer some of these questions. In particular, I will focus on some of the actors who are presently involved in the production of aspects of the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival, and how their activity intersects notions of Diaspora and transnationalism.
West Indian Immigration to New York

During the course of the last century, there have been two major waves of migration from the islands of the West Indies to United States, and the New York metropolitan area in particular. The first wave of migration spanned the first three decades of the twentieth century. The initial influx of West Indian immigrants began around 1900 and peaked in the 1920s. New York was the main port of entry and by 1930 more than half of the 72 thousand foreign-born blacks from the non-Hispanic Caribbean lived in New York. In 1920 West Indians constituted about a quarter of New York’s black population, and in 1930 nearly a fifth (Foner 2001, 4).

Following reforms to the immigration laws in 1965, a second wave of migration from the islands was initiated. This has continued unabated from that time to the present. It has seen the largest emigration flow in West Indian history, and more than half a million people have moved to New York City since 1965. Taken together, all the immigrants from the Anglophone Caribbean/West Indies are the largest immigrant group in New York. By 1998 a third of New York City’s black population was foreign born - the vast majority West Indian, and West Indian immigrants made up 8 percent of New York’s population, making them the largest immigrant group in the city (Foner 2001).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of New York</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Foreign Born</th>
<th>Foreign Born as Percentage of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Queens Borough</td>
<td>135,599</td>
<td>96,569</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan Borough</td>
<td>26,748</td>
<td>15,614</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brooklyn Borough</td>
<td>280,803</td>
<td>207,724</td>
<td>73.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronx Borough</td>
<td>95,090</td>
<td>64,111</td>
<td>67.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staten Island Borough</td>
<td>6,194</td>
<td>27,492</td>
<td>58.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total 5 Boroughs of New York City</td>
<td>544,434</td>
<td>387,621</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nassau County</td>
<td>43,179</td>
<td>27,492</td>
<td>63.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of New York</td>
<td>679,245</td>
<td>470,329</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: West Indian population in New York. These figures represent the collective population of immigrants from the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, British West Indies, Dutch West Indies, Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. Source: US Census Bureau website from US Census of Population, 2000.
In the US population census of 2000 it is revealed that the population of West Indian immigrants in the state of New York had risen above 600,000 of which sixty-nine percent were foreign born. Of this population more than five hundred and forty-four thousand live in the five boroughs of the city of New York, and greater than fifty percent of these immigrants live in the borough of Brooklyn, where there is the greatest percentage of immigrants identified as foreign born – that is born in the West Indian isles.

It must be noted that immigrants from Guyana are not represented in this statistical data. Guyana, geographically located on the South American mainland yet in the Caribbean, is very much an integral part of the West Indian community with which it shares the history of colonialism, slavery and indentureship. It is a member of the Caribbean Common Market and its citizens have represented the West Indies in sports such as cricket. Therefore the one hundred and nine thousand Guyanese immigrants in the state of New York in 2000,\(^8\) of whom eighty-one percent were foreign born, represents a substantial addition to the population of West Indians resident in New York at that time.

It is evident that this data does not include segments of the population that may comprise second-generation descendents of Caribbean immigrants, that is people who are American born and do not live in a household with foreign born Caribbean immigrants and would be viewed as American. However, from the data

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\(^8\) US Census 2000.
presented, the impact of the high percentage of the population that is foreign born is clear. There can be no doubt that this is a major factor in the transnational relations that are observed and maintained between the community of West Indians/Caribbean-Americans in New York and the home nations from which they come in the Caribbean. This no doubt impacts the relationships observed in this investigation of the Brooklyn carnival.

Transnational Linkages

Many West Indian migrants remain closely tied to their home societies. They highlight the role of transnational processes and practices, and in the first wave of migration a process of progressive network building sustained the flow until restrictive legislation in the 1920s and the depression of the 1930s cut it off (Fonner 2001). West Indians created “migration machines: sending networks that articulated with particular receiving networks in which new migrants could find jobs, housing, and sociability” (Tilley 1990, 90 in Fonner 2001). These transnational practices refer to the ways migrants sustain multi-stranded social relations, along family, economic, and political lines, that link their societies of origin and settlement. They build “transnational social fields” across geographic, cultural and political borders, and the immigrants who maintain these relationships that span borders are categorized as “transmigrants” (Basch 2001). Such practices were alive and well during the first wave of migration in the opening decades of the twentieth century, when many of the first-wave women were involved in New York-based voluntary
associations that raised money for scholarships, school supplies, and other projects in the home societies (Watkins-Owens 2001). Scher defines a “transnation” as any collectivity that exists outside of, yet in some relationship to a home-nation from which it draws concepts of itself, its history, and its culture. And, the relationship between an emigrant “community” of Trinidadians in New York and their home nation is one of continual action and reaction, and the two places and their constituents do not live cut off from each other but in constant contact (Scher 2003, 6).

Watkins-Owens notes that women were at the heart of family and social networks that assisted in the coming of new immigrants to New York during that first wave of migration. These women assisted in the provision of lodging, avenues for employment; and travel fares to come from the islands to New York. Women often imparted their traditions and outlook to children in these spaces, and participated in voluntary associations and women’s social networks. African Caribbean women’s participation in various voluntary associations, especially homeland and fraternal, was widespread in New York. Their involvement in and leadership of labor and political groups was more significant than had been recognized. Such affiliations promoted social class standing and status, served as sites of socialization for children, and provided places to meet appropriate marriage partners from one’s home community. Women’s work in these associations also reflected collective consciousness and opposition to colonial and racial oppression (Watkins-Owens 2001).
Women were deeply involved in the founding and activities of the Bermuda Benevolent Association organized in 1898, the Dorcas Committee of the Virgin Islands Congressional Council which raised large sums of money, the Montserrat Progressive Society under the leadership of Helena Benta (1930s), Danish Virgin Islands Ladies Mutual Aid Society (1915) that became Virgin Islands Ladies Aid Society after US purchase of islands in 1917, the Harlem Tenants League and the Jobs Campaign of the 1930s. Participation in such groups, including “rotating credit unions” – that is Sou Sou, reflected Caribbean home country patterns in which working people organized themselves in “friendly societies,” workingmen’s associations, political associations and women’s associations despite anti-combination legislation in the Caribbean territories (Reddock 1994, 149, in Watkins-Owens 2001, 45).

During this early migration period women also took part in the political organizations and affairs in which West Indian immigrants engaged. Marcus Garvey’s UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) attracted Caribbean migrant women from all walks of life. For instance, Springer Kemp was a Garveyite, Pan-Africanist who began working in the garment industry in 1933 and became Educational Director of Local 33 of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. She pursued her union activity internationally, particularly in East and West Africa, and maintained a social network of trade unionists with black women from the South and the Caribbean. Her associate, Trinidadian Charlotte Adelman organized laundry workers from 1936 (Watkins-Owens 2001).
Many of these first wave migrant women of the Caribbean became involved in the trade union and communist movements of the time. African Caribbean activist Bonita Williams headed the Communist Workers’ Alliance and led a mass movement of housewives against price increases in New York during the 1930s depression. And Trinidadian Claudia Jones\(^9\) became the Negro Affairs editor of the Young Communist League during the 1930s. She would later be known as the person who was responsible for the initiation of West Indian Carnival celebrations that flourishes today in Notting Hill, London. The earliest female immigrants, who arrived in 1900 or before, established networks that incorporated both males and females and proved especially crucial in sustaining a community of migrant women. And African Caribbean women, like southern migrant women, helped shift the pattern of household service from live-in to day work and were critical to the formation of the permanent Caribbean communities (Watkins-Owens 2001).

Carnival Actors of the First Wave

The initial carnival activities and celebrations that were begun in New York in the 1930s must be seen in the context of this general climate among these first wave immigrants. It must be taken in the context of the efforts to consolidate their positions as individuals and as an incipient community in New York at the time, while maintaining active contact with the families and communities from whom

\(^9\) Claudia Jones arrived in the United States in 1924 at the age of 8. She became a prominent figure in the communist, workers, and peace movements of the 1930s, 40s and 50s. In the aftermath of WWII, she was persecuted and sentenced for a year and a day in jail. Eventually, on December 22nd 1955, she was deported from the United States to England, where she continued her work as an activist, aiding the consolidation of the Caribbean, African and Asian communities in London (Boyce Davies 2007).
they originated in the Caribbean. Like Sparrow (above), a report on the 2007 Labor Day Carnival in the *Amsterdam News* notes the unity of the Caribbean community that “personifies the Caribbean brand identity” (Springer 2007). It points out that there is no water to divide West Indians in the tri-state area of New York, as:

> West Indians in America live, laugh, pray and play together, and understand for the most part, that their destiny depends on maintaining strong and healthy relationships with each other. (Springer 2007, 14)

But it is noted that there are problems in having unity around large issues such as those of empowerment and the setting up of economic institutions that serve the community. Notwithstanding this, the article remarks that

> ...the Diaspora plays an important role in the development of the Caribbean by way of remittance, medical missions, trade and the transfer of skills and other resources. (Springer 2007)

And in the Labor Day parade one continues to see Caribbean people unite around their culture, music and mas’ (Springer 2007). This perceptible unity of West Indians in New York around some of the artistic forms of the Caribbean is in fact not new, but has been in evidence from the events that served as the forerunners to the current Labor Day festival. And the artistes of the Caribbean have always played prominent roles in its performance.

> The Brooklyn Carnival has its roots in the pre-Lenten Harlem masquerade balls. A West Indian woman - Jessie Waddell, who was born in Tunapuna, Trinidad,
is recognized as the person who organized those early Carnival celebrations in New York. Her role in the founding of West Indian Carnival celebrations in New York must be viewed in the light of the prominent roles played by women of Caribbean origin in the New York at the time. She migrated to the United States in 1924, and decided to provide her culturally starved compatriots with a much-needed cultural link by staging a masquerade ball. She was also an accomplished musician, who led her own 10-piece orchestra called Nutones. From 1924-44 she promoted some of the biggest masquerade dances at the Renaissance Ballroom in Harlem. In 1947 she obtained a permit to stage the first outdoor parade along Lennox Avenue from 110th-142nd St (Cadogan 2007).

Waddell also had the assistance in these endeavors of noteworthy Trinidadian performers such as guitarist Gerald Clarke (Cadogan 2007) who also led his own band, which is featured as the accompanying orchestra on many of the calypso recordings made in New York in the 1930s-40s period. And he is known to have actively assisted calypsonians such as the Roaring Lion (Raphael De Leon), Atilla the Hun (Raymond Quevedo), and the Lord Executor (Phillip Garcia) when they ran into immigration troubles upon arriving in the USA from Trinidad for recording sessions (Rohlehr 1990). In 1947 Waddell was successful in obtaining approval from then Mayor James O’Dwyer to host a Carnival parade in the streets of Harlem. This was the first street Carnival parade organized by the members of the Caribbean community, and it came after a couple decades of hosting Carnival festivities in the different dance halls of Harlem (Cadogan 2007; Scher 2003). It is in
the context of this early street parade that she registered the first formal organization for hosting of the West Indian Carnival, namely the West Indies Day Association on March 25, 1948 (Cadogan 2007).

Waddell returned to Trinidad, and in Trinidad Guardian article dated January 26, 1971, she was praised as the woman who made “West Indians in U.S. Feel at Home” as a result of her leadership in the establishment of the Carnival festivities in New York. She remained in Trinidad until her death in 1975. Thus the life of this noble woman is tremendously symbolic of notions of diaspora. Having been separated from her homeland/place of birth through migration, she endeavored to maintain contact with the cultural wherewithal she inherited. She was able to do so through her activity as a musician and, in particular, the costumed masquerade balls she organized to make herself and other West Indians in New York at the time “feel at home.” And she completed the return journey to her homeland, Trinidad.

In a statement given to the Caribbean Life during the preparations for the West Indian American Carnival Parade 2007, current president of the WIADCA – West Indian American Day Carnival Association – Yolanda Lezama-Clarke, in emphasizing the continuing significance of the Carnival to the Caribbean community, draws attention to the importance and the role of the early Carnival celebrations to the members of the community at that time. She said that it is very salient to keep alive Caribbean culture in the United States: “We’ve achieved our 40th year, and the carnival is very significant to many people.” In particular, Lezama-
Clarke was impressed by a letter from an unidentified Barbados-born woman, who reflected on her youthful days in New York, when her mother took her and her siblings to view the spectacle of the parade on Eastern Parkway. She observed that this Barbadian immigrant found that at the time, “it was not so popular to be a West Indian in America” and “felt that assimilation was easier because of our event”, that is the West Indian Carnival parade. President Lezama-Claire explained that she takes great pride and pleasure from the fact that the extravaganza encompasses the entire Caribbean community.

This is not a Trinidad event, it is not Jamaican, its not Bajan (for Barbadian)...

It is all-inclusive. There are so many different people on the parkway, who represent the different islands. (Lezama-Claire in King 2007)

These statements and assessment of the role played by the Carnival celebrations in the life of the West Indian immigrants, in their adjustment to the harsh realities of existence in the urban space that is metropolitan New York, is exceedingly important to note. Further, they point to the tremendous contribution of numerous actors, individually and collectively in associations, in the provision of palliatives in the form of cultural and artistic outlets that soothe the transition process immigrants endure upon arrival on the new shores of America. And, just as the early cultural bearers of the carnival torch, Jesse Waddell, Gerald Clarke and others, this role continues to be filled today by present-day cultural artistes.
Present day Actors/Artistes

The Brooklyn Carnival, which in 2006 celebrated its 40th anniversary, is a continuation of earlier Harlem Carnival organized by Waddle. But while first wave immigrants organized the Harlem Carnival, the Brooklyn Carnival is the product and symbol of the second migration wave from the Caribbean to New York that followed in the wake of the 1965 reforms of the US immigration laws. Carlos Lezama, the father of the current president of the WIADCA, provided the leadership and inspiration for the organization of the festival during this current period.

Many people engaged in the carnival arts and their production in Brooklyn New York have filled the role of “transmigrants” (Basch 2001), and continue to do so during this ongoing period of the second wave of migration from the Caribbean to New York. Across borders they are actively involved in carnival celebrations and artistic endeavors that surround it, in different geographical locations. Through the maintenance of these relationships and cultural activities, these actors assist in the consolidation of the Caribbean community in New York. Phillip Kasinitz notes that the West Indian immigrants in New York, as a community, are “Invisible No More” (Kasinitz 2001). No doubt the annual production of the Labor Day Carnival festivities has contributed a large measure to the increased visibility of this community of immigrants, and the cultural artistes who perform and teach their skills in the spaces of the Caribbean and the metropolis have added greatly to this visibility.
For instance, Mr. Winston Munroe is the executive director of the Sesame Flyers organization. He arrived in Brooklyn New York in 1966 on Labor Day and became immediately involved in the festivities. He later became involved in the steelband Silhouettes in Brooklyn. A steelband of the same name existed in the village of Petit Bourg from which Mr. Munroe hails in Trinidad. The Sesame Flyers organization originated as a children’s masquerade band to involve the youth of Caribbean parentage in aspects of the Caribbean cultural heritage through the medium of Carnival. It has since evolved into a community organization that is involved in schools in Brooklyn through its Beacon Summer camp and its youth steelband, which operates in a few schools. It endeavors to bring educational services to the youth and assist the Caribbean immigrant community in matters such as immigration status.

To fulfill its objectives the organization has brought into its fold artistes such as Big Mike Antoine, Gene Toney, and musician Pelham Goddard, who arranged the Panorama song for their steelband in 2007. One of the main goals of the Sesame Flyers organization is to ensure that the youth of West Indian Caribbean parentage in Brooklyn, New York maintain some level of contact with the cultural heritage that their parents have bequeathed them and that they increase their knowledge in this regard (Munroe 2006, interview). In addition, members of the Sesame Flyers are also actively involved in the community of Petit Bourg in Trinidad. They host an annual end of year function in which elderly members of the community are
honored for their contributions to the community, and they also assist a youth soccer team in the area.\(^\text{10}\)

Fig. 3.2: Roseanne and Gene Toney flank this author. Picture taken at the Dem Stars panyard, Brooklyn 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer 2007)

\(^{10}\) This I learnt during my visit to Brooklyn in August 2007, when my father who hails from the community of Petit Bourg in Trinidad was approached to make a financial contribution to the efforts to assist the youth soccer team in Trinidad.
Gene Toney is a dancer and dance choreographer, who has been involved in the performance of Caribbean folk dances since the early 1960s. Since 1972, he has led his own dance troupe, The Ujaama Dance Company, which has been based just west of the capital Port of Spain in Trinidad. Together with members of his dance troupe, Gene has been actively involved in the Trinidad carnival, participating in the annual limbo dance competition that is held along with other pre-carnival shows in the run-up to the annual Carnival parade. He has also worked in the capacity of choreographer for the masquerade bands, led by bandleader Big Mike Antoine, Legends (now defunct) and presently, Legacy in the Trinidad Carnival. I met Gene in Brooklyn while conducting my field research. He and his wife were at the time playing steelpan with the steel orchestra, Dem Stars.

Both he and his wife, Roseanne, worked with the Beacon camp at the Bildersee High School in Brooklyn, as instructors of Caribbean dance. In the summer of 2006, they invited me to visit a couple of their sessions with the youth and also to attend the final show of the camp. In that camp the youth, who are primarily of West Indian/Caribbean parentage, were taught, and they ably performed, Caribbean dances to which they were being exposed for the first time. In particular, these were the Bèlè, Limbo and a medley of Caribbean African dances.

As well, Gene was engaged to choreograph a dance for the masquerade band, Sesame Flyers, and I had the opportunity to witness this at one of the rehearsals held for the masqueraders who were to perform this dance on the Eastern Parkway
during the Labor Day Carnival Parade competition. When I returned to Brooklyn in 2007 for the Labor Day festivities, Gene and his wife had just concluded their camp involvement for that year, and they were much engaged in other activities. I met his wife at the rehearsal of the Sesame Flyers steel orchestra in which she played the “scratcher”\textsuperscript{11}. And, Gene performed as a calypsonian at the Sesame Flyers Friday Night Calypso Tent. He also performed with a soca band as one of the lead singers, and he explained that he was not playing pans in 2007 because he was involved in the sewing of costumes for the Sesame Flyer mas’ band.

\textsuperscript{11} Trinidian term for the guiro.
Fig. 3.3: Gene (center) and Roseanne (left) prepare to perform an African Dance with the Sesame Flyers Dancers during the organization’s Block Party in Brooklyn, August 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer 2007)
Gene’s Involvement in Dance

Gene’s life story as an artist is highly relevant to the issues of Caribbean and African diasporas that this work addresses. He got his first opportunity to dance while still a student in elementary school. This was in 1962, when Trinidad and Tobago attained political independence, and he began dancing when the Prime Minister Eric Williams introduced the Best Village Program throughout the nation,
and groups were formed in many areas of the country. In those days there were youth movements and village councils, so the dance groups emanated from these organizations. Carlton Francis was the president of the village’s youth movement, Cocorite Youth Movement at the time. He brought dancers such as Jean Coggins, and Henry White from the Julia Edwards Company to teach dance to the group.

Gene’s account of his introduction into dance through the Prime Minister’s Best Village Program, in some respects resonates with artistic activity in West African post-colonial national states. The Best Village Program is an artistic program geared at engaging villagers throughout the twin-island state in various facets of local folk artistic endeavor. Through it, folk dances, songs, craftsmanship, and drama have been fostered and developed. And in terms of African-derived performance genres, it became a forum within which Orisha drumming, singing, and dance practices were openly displayed. A similar situation took place in post-colonial West Africa within the recently arisen independent states. The newly empowered national governments of states such as Ghana set up national performing dance companies. Through these groups traditional dance performances were reinvigorated, although in a recontextualized setting (Hanna 1965).

Gene recalls that the dance company in Cocorite was initially named the Harding Ville Dance Company, because the base of the youth movement was in Harding Place, Cocorite. But the name was eventually changed. Gene reminisces:

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12 Village located on the Western outskirts of Port of Spain.
13 Interview with Gene Toney, Brooklyn 2006.
We point out to Carlton – Julia Edwards company name after her; Jean Coggins … ah say: well name it Carlton Francis …that is how the Carlton Francis; but he didn’t want to do that, because he didn’t want to, you know, take that thing on him. We say: well name it Carlton Francis Dance Company so he did that. (Toney 2006, interview)

As a member of the Carlton Francis Dance Company, Gene toured Grenada for Expo ’6714, and Montego Bay in Jamaica in 1971-72. Upon return to Trinidad he formed his own group on the 20th of November 1972, namely the Ujaama Folk Performers. He notes that:

Ujaama is a Swahili word meaning Brotherhood or Community; you know, we name it after; because ah didn’t like my name … you know; ah do this; offer brotherly love and the little thing. So that’s what the name about; because that was the whole aspect of the group; the significance of the group; it not like I is the leader; what I say goes and this and that. If we have something to talk, we always form a circle and have discussions. (Toney 2006, interview)

The adoption of a word of an African language for the name of the dance company mirrors a practice that became prevalent in the New World, particularly after the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the United States in the ‘60s. Trinidad and Tobago experienced its own Black Power movement that culminated with an

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14 A cultural exposition in which various island nations of the Caribbean participated. Carifesta has since supplanted it.
uprising in 1970. During this movement and in its aftermath many individuals and groups sought to overtly demonstrate their historical connections with Africa, and adoption of African names was one of the ways in which this took place. In fact, this author was a member of a basketball team that also carried the name Ujaama. There was another team that carried the name, Harambee, another Swahili word that mirrors Ujaama in its reference to community, brotherhood and togetherness, the latter also being the name of a basketball team in North Trinidad in the mid to later 1970s.

In 1973, the Ujaama Folk Performers toured Jamaica and Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands. In subsequent years the group also toured Maracaibo in Venezuela, St. Croix, St. Thomas, Montserrat, Martinique, India, and Haiti. In 1980 they toured the United States, and then went to Toronto and Montreal in Canada. These countries and cities, visited by the Ujaama performers on their various tours, reveal the pan-Caribbean connections in the group’s performance activity. While Jamaica, Cayman Islands, The Virgin Islands, Montserrat, Martinique, and Haiti are clearly Caribbean, the cities Montréal and Toronto possess large Caribbean communities. Venezuela has shared some measure of transnational relationship with citizens of the Caribbean, Trinidad in particular. For instance, the Christmas performance genre, parang, is common to both places, and one of the early calypso recording artistes, Lionel Belasco, lived in both places (Rohlehr 1990). Carlos Lezama, deceased leader of the WIADCA, also lived in both places prior to moving to New York. In addition, the Joropo, the national dance of Venezuela, is one of the dances that is traditionally performed by dance companies in Trinidad, and has been performed by the Ujaama Company. The visit to India also relates

15 Tribute to Carlos Lezama, magazine published by the WIADCA, 2002.
to the Caribbean diasporic situation, the region being the home of a long standing East Indian diasporic community, and members of the Ujaama group such as Roxanne, Gene’s wife, and the drummer Billy Sammy, are of distinct East Indian origin.

Pelham Goddard

Also associated with the Sesame Flyers organization is Pelham Goddard, a renowned Trinidadian musician who has been at the forefront of calypso and soca music since the 1970s. He has worked with numerous calypso and soca artistes, for example Sparrow, Kitchener, Shorty, David Rudder, Tambu Herbert, Machel Montano, Superblue, and Calypso Rose. In fact, he was the arranger of 13 road marches.16 He was the leader and musical director of the soca/calypso band Charlie’s Roots that lit up parties and the road in Trinidad at Carnival time, and provided music for the masquerade bands of famed mas’ designer Peter Minshall.

The band was also was deeply involved in the Carnivals of North America, particularly Toronto and Brooklyn, during the 1980s-1990s. Pelham continues to be involved in the carnival music of Trinidad, as a music producer of some of the young soca artistes and as the musical arranger of one of the foremost steelbands in Trinidad and Tobago, the Exodus Steel Orchestra. It is in this capacity as the musical arranger of the Sesame Flyers Steel Orchestra that he has made a return to the space of the Brooklyn Carnival, being hired by the Sesame Flyer organization to impart some of his extensive knowledge to the youths of the steelband. About some of his performance activity as a keyboardist in the 1970s, Pelham remembers:

16 This is the most popular or most played calypso on the road for carnival days in Trinidad.
As a musician now… you get a chance to go St. Thomas, when we reach there in the airport; Francine, Relator, Sparrow, Kitchener, Rose, Chalkdust, Alrounder; a whole plane full of calypsonians and the band, you understand; Shorty I, everybody. So we spent… a week; because the big show is on the Friday night and then the parade … So we used to do, go St. Croix first, do a prelude or a show in St. Croix and then go over to St. Thomas, and that went on for some years … apart for the Carnival in St. Thomas, that is when calypso used to go right through the islands. We used to go Antigua, St. Croix, St. Martin, Tortola; all of these places playing calypso with Arthur de Couteau, because he was the main back up band. (Goddard 2006, interview)

These experiences of Pelham, similar to that of Gene, point to the pan Caribbean nature of the calypso and carnival performance mediums, and the transnational activity in which these artistes engaged. Such activity embraced not only the Caribbean region but included the metropolitan cities in North America and Europe.
Some Other Actors

Masquerader Glen Turnbull is another person who epitomizes the role of transmigrant among the body of artistes engaged in the Brooklyn Carnival. Originally from St. Croix in the US Virgin islands, Glen is the leader of the D’Midas International organization in New York. D’Midas is a transnational masquerade organization that originated in Trinidad and now has branches in Trinidad, New York, Toronto, California, Florida and the Virgin Islands. While being in charge of the New York activities of the D’Midas, Glen continues to be an active participant in the masquerade portrayals. He has performed as the King of the Band and won titles in that capacity in the carnivals of the Virgin Islands and Florida. In the 2008 Trinidad Carnival he placed fifth among finalists in the King of the Band competition. With regard to the Brooklyn Labor Carnival celebrations, D’Midas is reliant on the services of its founder and designer, Stephen Derek, who comes to New York to complete the construction of costumes. Because of lack of space the construction of the large costumes is often started in Trinidad and completed in New York (Turnbull 2006, interview). Thus the costumes themselves become engaged in the transmigration process that is involved in the production of the event.

Another individual who has been actively involved in the transnational activity is Mr. Joseph Gerald. Known to many as Franklyn, he came to New York in 1973. Prior to his arrival in Brooklyn he was a member of the famous West Indian Tobacco Desperadoes Steel Orchestra, having been involved with steelpan from his
earliest years in the 1950s. On arriving in New York he quickly got involved in the steelpan movement, and eventually reached the point of starting his own band, The Caribbean Youth Panoramics (CYP). This band was started with the primary aim of providing a space within which the children of immigrants like himself may be gain exposure to the cultural heritage of the Caribbean and in particular that the steelband (Gerald 2006, interview). While visiting the panyard in 2006 it became clear that the band consisted of a cross-section of people who originated from the Caribbean at large, with youths whose parents came from Grenada, Barbados and Trinidad, etc. The parents of the youth were actively involved in the operations of the band, ensuring that the young charges came to rehearsals each day, and refreshments were provided for the participants of the steelband. Mr. Franklyn’s wife and immediate family bore the brunt of responsibility in this regard.
During the preparations for the 2006 Panorama in Brooklyn, the band was supplemented and directly aided by members of the La Horquetta Pan Grove, a Trinidad steelband, who came to Brooklyn for that sole purpose. In 2007 CYP did not perform separately, but they joined forces with the Dem Stars Steel Orchestra for the panorama competition. Here too, players from a Tobago Steel Orchestra, Our Boys, directly aided the band, Dem Stars. These examples illustrate the
transnational connections that are maintained by Franklyn and others. In Trinidad Carnival of 2008 Mr. Franklyn further consolidated his transmigrant activity by serving as the musical arranger of the young steelband, Lavantille Serenaders, during the Panorama steelband competition in Trinidad. This band hails from the same district as the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra of which he had been a long-standing member.\textsuperscript{17}

Travis Roberts is the captain of the 2006 Champion Steel band in the Brooklyn Panorama, The CASCYM\textsuperscript{18} Steel Orchestra. He hails from the isle of St. Vincent and has been a resident in the New York since 1986. In St. Vincent he grew up with first hand involvement in the carnival arts, as his father - then a schoolteacher – was also one of the foremost mas’ bandleaders in the country. Travis got his first taste of pan in St. Vincent, and quickly gravitated to it when he heard that there were moves to introduce the steelband in the high school that he attended in Brooklyn. And he has gone on to teach of steel pans in high schools throughout the New York area (Roberts 2006, interview). About CASCYM he says:

CASCYM stands for Caribbean American Sports and Culture Youth Movement. We’ve been in existence since 1983 by the leadership of Mr. William Jones, and CASCYM came about because of ... a lot of parents from the West Indies came up in the 70s, 80s and they wanted a place for their kids who was growing up to basically have a outlet and to have a part of their culture. So it

\textsuperscript{17} Personal communication with Mr. Franklyn between November 2007 and April 2008.
\textsuperscript{18} Caribbean American Social and Cultural Youth Movement.
start off with soccer, dance, drama and stuff like that; was never really a steelband band until – like 1987; yes 1987 we got some pans from another organization, and from then the steelband just took over the whole group. (Roberts 2006, interview)

About the activities of the group he says further:

We have...a steelband program in several different public schools in New York City right now... So I, myself is one of the personal instructors that teach in like four different schools and then there is other people in the band that also goes in different schools, and help out in the different schools...Ah mean most of the kids them in the New York area have West Indian background, that’s in the schools that we in; because what happen is, a lot of the principals are West Indian and most of them think - ok, the steelband will help motivate the kids them, make them focus, and they try to bring it into their schools so they will have something different and unique. (Roberts 2006, interview)

Hence not only is the activity of the CASCYM aimed at providing cultural knowledge of the Caribbean to the youth of West Indian parentage, but in Travis’s estimation even principals of the schools are attempting to utilize the artistic practices of the Caribbean to motivate the youth. Of his experience with the Carnival in his native St. Vincent, Travis points out:

I have a lot of experience in St. Vincent mas’. My father is, his name is...

Edison Shegyjardin... in the 1970s, 1980s, early 1990s, his band was one of
the top bands in St. Vincent... mas’ band. So I in the culture, right now I am
the pan man, he was the mas’ man. Well he still is the mas’ man, and his band
was called Bad Lads and Lasses... They won a lot of competition in St. Vincent
in the early70s, 80s, and they were like one of the top bands then. So I grew
up with my father learning to build mas’. At one point I used to build mas’. I
play junior king for four years straight; won twice, came second... In 1994 I
went home, after I came here, ’cause I came in this country in 1990, and 1994
I went back home for the first time and I played king of the band with him...
’cause I was old enough to play king of the band. So I have basically grew up
in the culture with my father for a long time. (Roberts 2006, interview)

He continues:

The steel band, I did not get involved with the steel band in St. Vincent until
like 1986. How...that happened... was my school started up a steel orchestra
and I decided to try it out, and I started playing a tenor and the arranger, the
guy that was in it, was involved with a group called Potential Steel Orchestra
...They was called Vin Lik Potential Steel Orchestra because the electricity
company sponsor them... so I started in the school band, and then I went and
started to play with them in the big band, Potential Steel Orchestra. I played
with them for 2-3 years. I wasn’t on the stage side, just Panorama, ’cause it
was a little distance to travel and my grandmother... didn’t want me traveling
everyday back and forth out there. So that was my basic pan experience in St.
Vincent ... Then when I migrated to New York, came to live with my mom, I went to Prospect Heights High School forget about pan. ... I found out that there was a steel orchestra that was starting up in the Prospect Heights High School, and I was like wow – my opportunity to start back. So I went and I auditioned and I joined the group. Then come to find out it was Ardin Herbert who was teaching us there, and he was affiliated with the CASCYM steel orchestra, so in the same way I get to join the CASCYM steel orchestra. So is always through a school; I start in a school in St. Vincent and end up in Potential Steel orchestra, I start in a school in Brooklyn and then I end up in CASCYM for the last; how much years I’m with CASCYM. 16 years. (Roberts 2006, interview)

Travis, like many of the other participants and leaders who engage in the production of the annual Carnival event in Brooklyn, has maintained material and cultural connections with his native St. Vincent, contributing to the consolidation of transnational linkages, while following the footsteps of his father.

Basch (2001) examines the transnational linkages between the politicians of St. Vincent and Grenada and the immigrants of these isles in New York. These linkages are often established and maintained in order to assist the political agendas of the politicians and their parties, as well as to aid developmental and tourism projects of the island governments. In this regard there is evidence that the government of Barbados, through its tourism agency, has been directly involved in
the Labor Day festivities in Brooklyn. And it has in the past funded the participation of artistes, singers and music bands, and the production of a Barbados masquerade band on the Parkway. This has been done in part to promote its tourism agenda and the annual Barbados Carnival – the Crop-Over Festival (See Fig.3.).

George Whitehead, a Barbadian immigrant and leader of Destination Slope pointed out the following:

We started out in 1990 with the guide to promote Barbados’s Crop Over. Crop Over is an annual event that we have every year in Barbados, it just finish end of July- first week in August. We promote Barbados culture. We’ve put for the past nine years, as you saw with the floats from the pictures, some of our biggest groups, Square One, Allison Hinds; we have also had Krosfyah. We’ve had the only Barbadian group to have won the Road March, Rupi, Jump, on the Parkway. And we have also been one of the very first groups to have achieved such levels as a small band for Barbados; from Destination Slope… one of our goals over the years has been also to promote the culture of Carnival as we know it through the Caribbean. (Whitehead 2006, interview)

On the issue of sponsorship and funding for his carnival productions he said:

The costumes we don’t make much money, but I was getting sponsors. At the time we had big sponsors like Alpine … different manufacturers that came through my side of it, my electronic business; and also the National Culture
Foundation of Barbados... They would give us the platform as far as the entertainment; they took care of the bands (music) for us... I provide the music (equipment), the truck. (Whitehead 2006, interview)

Through this type of relationship in which the National Cultural Foundation of Barbados assisted in the funding the participation of Barbadian artistes and music bands, many of the prominent soca artistes from Barbados have taken part in the Labor Day Carnival in Brooklyn. Some of these include: Mac Fingal, Edwin Yearwood and the band Krosfyah, Allison Hinds and Square One, Coalishun, Troubadours from Canada; Rupi. TC, and Young Blood. Wyclef Jean (of Haitian descent) of the Fugees has also participated in the festival, making use of the sound system trucks of Whitehead and his Destination Slope. Whitehead also makes broader regional and diasporal linkages about the presence of West Indian immigrants in New York, he says:

We have to understand that we live in this country, we have to together; and being Barbadian, Trinidadian... We are West Indians, but more important we all black people together, and we stop doing this like – aw because he is not one of us we got to treat him differently. That’s not right. (Whitehead 2006, interview)

Thus he clearly articulates a common bond between the West Indians irrespective of the national origin, and adds an additional commonality as “black people.”
Fig. 3.6: George Whitehead at the offices of his business place on Utica Ave, Brooklyn 2006. (Photograph by Ken Archer)
Fig. 3.7: Revelers in the Barbados band on Labor Day; note the advertisement of the Crop Over 2007. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)

The examples of these players in the Brooklyn Carnival, who are intimately linked to the Carnivals of Trinidad and the Caribbean at large, evoke critique of the concept of diaspora. This concept of diaspora often infers some measure of disconnection or cleavage between the diasporic peoples and spaces and the place of origin, ostensibly the homeland. But as observed in the practice of these actors
and with the Brooklyn Carnival in general, the issue of disconnection is minimal if not nonexistent. In fact, what happens is that the community bonds are cemented even stronger within and across national lines, and this is clearly evident through the performance of the Carnival celebrations. This is undoubtedly aided by the fact that a significant majority of the West Indian population in present-day New York is foreign born, being first generation residents. And, this fuels the drive to maintain contacts with the direct input of artistes who have been, or still are, actively involved in the carnival arts throughout the Caribbean.

The input of these players and numerous others like them may be likened to the coals that are added to rekindle the flames of a fire. The players continually add new fuel to the fire of the Brooklyn Carnival, and this fuel is brought directly from the ongoing experience of the different performance genres of the Trinidad Carnival and those of the Caribbean as a whole, be it in the form of the music, the masquerade, or the steelbands. Firemen, who can be directly linked to the Caribbean, continually stoke the flames of the Brooklyn Carnival. In this context it is therefore perfectly logical to view the community of Caribbean people living in Brooklyn as an extension of the Caribbean communities that exist overseas, across borders. And, one may speak of a Caribbean transnation, not as an imagined community, but as one fully realized with continual links that are maintained across these borders.
The Steelband as a Metaphor for Diaspora

The term “diaspora” originated with the historic experience of the Jewish people, and referred to Jewish captivity and dispersal. The Jews were held captive by Nebuchadnezzar “by the rivers of Babylon” in Mesopotamia. They were also held in Egypt and Assyria, and were dispersed from Judea by the Romans. Over centuries, Jewish exiles suffered while their homeland became embroiled in the politics and wars of the major imperial powers (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Persia, Greece, Rome, Turkey and Great Britain), and religious crusades that swept the area. As a result many were forced to work in distant lands while their homelands was plundered and occupied. Thus, the terms “exile” and “bondage” are greatly connected to the concept of diaspora (Skinner 1993; Cohen 1997).

Sometime between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s, the expression African Diaspora began to be used increasingly (Harris 1993). As a mode of study it gained momentum from 1965 when the International Congress of African Historians convened in Tanzania (Harris 1993; Shepperson 1993). The use of the term in the study of populations of African descent has drawn on the noted parallels in the experience of these populations and that of the Jewish people. Like the Jewish people Africans were victims of imperial powers, being forcibly removed from their homelands that were eventually conquered by foreign powers, and taken to distant lands to dwell in servitude (Skinner 1993; Cohen 1997). The concept subsumes the global dispersion (voluntary and involuntary) of Africans throughout history, the
emergence of a cultural identity abroad based on origin and social condition, as well as the psychological or physical return to the homeland, Africa (Harris 1993).

Dispersal of The Steelband to New York

In terms of these issues of global dispersion, cultural identity abroad, social condition, and return, the steelband provides interesting parallels with the concept of “diaspora”. Over the last half a century the steelband movement has grown significantly and expanded its wings outside of its Caribbean birthplace, across the globe. It has developed a global dimension that has come about through voluntary migration of people who have been involved with the movement in the Caribbean, and also through the embracing of the steelpan instrument by people outside of the region. As such, significant steelband communities can be found in many cities of North America and Europe, and there are even steelbands in Japan.

In many of these metropolitan cities, such as in Toronto, London, New York, Washington DC and so on, the steelband movement was initiated and is maintained by migrant pan players. This is indeed the case in Brooklyn. The spread of steelpan music to New York was started by a handful of Trinidadian immigrants in the years following World War II. Most noteworthy among these is Rudy King who formed a band soon after his arrival in Brooklyn in 1949. He eventually led the band Tropicans, which was the “mainstay of the Brooklyn Eastern Parkway Carnival celebrations and Panorama contests in the 1970s” (Allen and Slater 2001). Since King, many others have followed. Players such as Reynolds Caraballo, Conrad

In relation to the center, point of origin, Trinidad, steelbands in Brooklyn maintain their allegiances. Just as in the case of the enslaved communities of Africans in the Caribbean, who named dances after ethnic groups in Africa, some bands in Brooklyn have adopted names that point directly to the Trinidad bands from which their founding membership came. This mirrors the practice of the soccer and cricket teams that carry the names of different island nations of the Caribbean. Thus, there is Crossfire, which is named after a steelband from the St. James community in western Port of Spain, and is led by Mr. Martin Douglas a former member of the Trinidad band.19 Moods Pan Grove was founded and is run by former members of the Phase II Pan Grove Steel Orchestra of Woodbrook, Port of Spain.20 Mr. Joseph “Franklyn” Gerald is a long-standing member of the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra, commonly referred to as Despers, situated in the community of Lavantille in east Port of Spain. He makes the following observation:

Despers USA. Out of that band Despers USA, have come two other bands...

One is called D”Radoes; Now if we recognize what the D means... so we have Despers USA; we have D’ Radoes; and then another girl (Gloria Gormory)

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20 Interview with Keith Glaude and Patrick Phillips, Brooklyn 2006.
from on the hill (Lavantille) ... she was all part of us; she decided to have her own band; she call her band Pantonics. So we have Despers USA, D'Radoes, we have Pantonics, now we have my group, and there was another band named Metro that was also an offspring. Now the Pantonics, that's why for years when Bradley was alive, he used to arrange for two bands in New York. He used to arrange for Despers USA, then when Metro broke off he started to arrange for Metro; he used to arrange for Radoes, and he used to arrange for Pantonic. (Gerald 2006, interview)

Not only do these bands refer symbolically, by choice of names, to the ensembles from which their founders came, but they maintain concrete links with them. For instance, Bradley, to whom Mr. Franklyn refers, is Clive Bradley, the revered musical arranger for the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra. He arranged for the band from 1968 to the time of his death in November 2005. As is noted here, he also arranged the Panorama tunes in the annual steelband competition in Brooklyn, for those bands that recognize their connection to the Trinidad steelband. And members in the steelband diaspora abroad return, participate and/or lend moral support to the band from which they came in Trinidad.

Critiques of the literature on globalization and global culture recognize that there is the tendency to “focus on the recent acceleration in the flow of technology, goods and resources,” and foreground “the flows principally as a north-to-south or center-to-periphery direction” (Nurse 2004, 246). Nurse makes the case for the
foregrounding of the reverse phenomenon, “globalization in reverse,”^21 whereby flows emanate from the south, the periphery in colonialis/imperialist discourse, and impact the life of the north or metropolitan centers of politically dominant nations. The steelband movement, in its diasporization, provides a perfect example of this. The center of this movement is located in the south, the periphery of globalization discourse. And with its spread it has tremendously influenced the spaces of the north. From its birth in the tamboo bamboo bands^22 in Trinidad, it has spread globally, and there are steel orchestras throughout North America and Europe.

Cultural Identity

In the course of this dispersal the steelband has fashioned its distinctive cultural identity, which is patterned after its existence in Trinidad. One of the markers of this identity is the Panorama competition. This annual competition, held in the days preceding the actual carnival parades, came into prominence in Trinidad in early 1960s, and it has grown into the principal steelband activity in the Carnival celebrations. In the diasporic spaces such as New York, Toronto and London, Panorama has also taken center stage, with the competition being held as part of the Labor Day, Caribana and Notting Hill Carnival festivities. There is even a Panorama competition in Japan. Performances at these Panorama competitions are revered for

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^21 This concept derives from Louise Bennett’s 1966 poem “Colonizin’ in Reverse”, as Nurse (2004) acknowledges.

^22 Ensembles of percussive instruments made from varied lengths of bamboo stems. While they can still be found, they were a popular means of musical accompaniment for carnival bands up to the Second World War, before the advent of the modern steel and brass bands.
the musical arrangements, which project the high level of skill and dexterity of the players. And, this is one of the main attractions that have drawn Americans to steelband performance. For many of them the steelband is defined by Panorama. It is also the main attraction for many young players in the Caribbean.\footnote{Personal observations.}

Further, in its humble beginnings within the tamboo bamboo percussion ensembles, the steelband was associated with the masquerade of Carnival in Trinidad. Initially these bands were especially connected to the J’ouvert festivities\footnote{J’ouvert is the name given to Carnival street celebrations that are held from the pre-dawn hours of Carnival Monday morning in Trinidad.}, but eventually joined in the provision of musical accompaniment for the many mas’ bands that traversed the streets during the two days of Carnival. Many of these bands even produced their own mas’. This tradition continues in Trinidad but has waned a bit. However this has been recaptured as part of the cultural identity of the steelbands in Brooklyn, where the bands were instrumental in the institutionalization of J’ouvert. In addition to portraying their own masquerade themes, steelbands also provide musical accompaniment to many mas’ bands. J’ouvert in Brooklyn is significantly defined by the sound of the steelpan ensembles.

Social Condition

While steelbands can be found in many universities and high schools across the United States, in the communities of Caribbean immigrants its existence is symbolic of the disadvantaged social condition and victim status that is often the
fate of the members of such immigrant communities. This is particularly evident in the experiences of the steelband movement in relation to property and housing facilities.

Steelbands in Brooklyn have mirrored their counterparts in Trinidad, in that their existence has been a shifting one. In Trinidad, steelbands have had to endure uncertain tenure that necessitated moving from “yard to yard” in order to keep themselves going. Occupancy at their various locations has been extremely unstable, and although this situation has been stabilized to a large extent over the last quarter of a century, there are still recent examples of steelbands having to leave, or being threatened with the possibility of eviction from locations that have been established as their homes. The recent relocation of the Starlift Steel Orchestra from its long-standing panyard in west Port of Spain, to make way for the construction of a high-rise apartment complex is but a current manifestation of this shifting/relocating phenomenon that has accompanied the steelband movement in Trinidad throughout its history. Similarly, the refusal of Phase II Steel Orchestra to move to accommodate the same complex, and the threats faced by the Invaders Steel Orchestra of eviction from the site they have called home since the 1940s, are further examples this.

The steelbands of New York continue to endure the same uncertainty of home. They are in constant search for a fixed place to rehearse, especially during the run-up to the Labor Day Panorama competition when the bands are at full strength and engaged in practice towards participation in this competition. The following
testifies to this shifting existence of the New York steelbands, as well as to the
adversarial conditions with which they are perpetually faced. But, like many
diasporic people these bands persevere in face of the hardships with which they are
presented.

New York - Wow! Another New York steelband season has passed. All in all it
was a very good season depending on your perspective. Most of the New
York steelbands made it out for the Summer season. And as we all know that
is no small feat. Every year it is becoming increasingly difficult for
steelbands to survive in the Big Apple. Indeed, every year bands seem to have
different zip codes for their pan yards. Real estate is currently
at a premium in the New York area. The challenges facing any
steelpans performance organization in this city is tremendous
and constantly in a state of flux. Yet in spite of this the bands came out in
force. The steelband movement is very strong in New York in spite of
environmentally unfriendly confines.²⁵

The testimony of those leaders of steelband organizations to whom I spoke in
Brooklyn bears witness to this uncertainty of abode that is experienced by the steel
band movement as a whole. For instance, Mr. Winston Munroe of the Sesame Flyers
pointed out that, whereas the organization’s steelband had practiced at a venue in
near proximity to the organization’s headquarters on Church Avenue in Brooklyn, in

²⁵ Email message from *When Steel Talks*, September 7th 2007.
2005 and 2006 they had to find alternative accommodation during the preparations for Panorama and they were able to successfully negotiate the use of a school yard. He noted however that this too was not appropriate, since it necessitated that the band move immediately after Labor Day in order to make way for the influx of school children who returned to school the very next day (Munroe 2006, interview). When I visited the band as they practiced for the 2007 version of Panorama they were at another location.

Mack, a founding member and elder of Pan Sonatas, currently the oldest functioning steelband in Brooklyn, had a similar story to tell. The band has a band room in which the stage side practices. This is built on the backyards of Mack and another Trinidadian, who is his neighbor and also a founding member of the steelband. For the Panorama season they have experienced the same hassles of not having an adequate venue in which to rehearse. At times they have resorted to rehearsal in the streets, having to face the vagaries of the NYPD, who have on occasion sought to limit their rehearsal times (Mack 2006, interview). In 2006 the band conducted rehearsals in a schoolyard opposite the home of Mack, but all the preparatory work, the painting of pans, welding of racks and so on, was actually done on the sidewalk and street (See Fig. 3.8 and 3.9). This is what Mack had to say on the issue of the accommodation of steelbands:

We were fortunate to have the two backyards to practice in, which we have out grown, ... the last 10-15 years; it’s too small for us. That’s one of the
reasons that we have to go out in the schoolyard, but two years ago the police used to hassle us, actually... They wanted us to stop at 9 o’clock. We did that for one night, but we get politicians and other people to help us out; including the police and they allowed us to practice till 11-12 o’clock. But speaking about pans and moving from place to place, it’s really rough to get a spot. If we can get a good spot big enough for us to rehearse year round; you know, where we can have indoor practice during the winter and big enough for the whole band during summer; we would love to get a place like that. All steelbands would like to get a place like that. (Mack 2006, interview)
Fig. 3.8: Pan racks of the Sonatas Steelband being welded on the road (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
The captain of CASCYM, Travis Roberts, spoke of similar woes. He had this to say:

Since we in existence...during the Panorama season, we always have to find a suitable yard, a suitable place for us to have our rehearsal. Normally we rehearse on Lincoln Road and Nostrand, and that’s where we have been stationed for the last 15 years. It is a church called St. Francis of Assisi. It’s a catholic church... they have a recreation center that we rent from them, so we
use the basement to carry on our regular stage side rehearsal. So... in that way you don’t really need a big yard, because is not a Panorama, is just the regular stage side; and we also teach kids there on a Friday and a Saturday from 6-8 to play the steel pan also...That facility is our home base basically, but during the summer when we need to practice for the Panorama, we have all our equipment, the racks and stuff like that, we need a bigger space and that’s a problem. And like after Panorama you have to find space to store those racks and that’s always a headache. (Roberts 2006, interview)

He adds:

You might see a yard open and you go ask the person if you could leave these stuff here and ... you have to rent it of course, and you pay whatever because you need your equipment to be secure. So lot of times we move from yard to yard; every year we in some new spot. ... The New York City space is very limited, any little space right now they putting a house (laughs) ... having a steel orchestra in New York is very difficult; it's challenging but most of the bands dem do it. (Roberts 2006, interview)

Similarly, Mr. Franklyn, founder of Caribbean Youth Panoramics, had to move his band at the end of the 2006 Panorama season because the owner of the property wanted to make way for real estate development.²⁶ Bandleaders are therefore

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²⁶ Interviews conducted in Brooklyn, New York, August 2007.
forced at times to expend money in finding storage for the many racks and pans that by and large remain idle outside of the Panorama season.

As such the steelband, individually and collectively, can be posited as a metaphor for diaspora. Their experiences in finding a fixed place of abode can be paralleled to that of the members and their families as migrants. Many members of immigrant communities face the uncertainties of a shifting existence as they struggle to make the new land their home and attain stability in their lives. Bands are caused to move and they sprout their practices in another venue, another space. In fact the proliferations of Trinidad/West Indian Carnivals of which these steelbands are a part, can also be taken as metaphors of the Diaspora, made to move and sprout in new surroundings, often with new influences and materials but there are lot of retentions of the old surroundings and practices, such as masking, the music, the dance, the behavior. And indeed, these can stand as metaphor for the existence of the Diaspora of the peoples who bring them to life, the Caribbean cultural Diaspora (Cohen, 1997), and the African Diaspora for those traditions that emanated among the peoples of African descent in the Caribbean.

Mixture, Hybridity

During the second half of the 20th century, anthropologists, literary theorists, and cultural critics have increasingly used the term “diaspora” to describe the mass migrations and displacements of peoples. In particular, independence movements in formerly colonized areas, waves of refugees fleeing war-torn states,
and fluxes of economic migration in the post-WWII era have given rise to large immigrant communities in the metropolitan cities of the world. Thus, while still referring to the dispersal of human populations from their places and communities of origin, the scope of the concept of diaspora has been significantly broadened from its initial associations with forced exile, bondage, and victim status. As such, diaspora, diasporic and diaspora-ization have become contested terms, the meanings and multiple referents of which are currently being theorized and debated (Braziel and Mannur 2003).

In recent theoretical discourse, the diaspora concept that links communities by common heritage, history, and racial descent, have been critiqued for homogenizing difference (Gilroy, 1993). It has been used to articulate hybridity, as opposed to a pure essence, as a condition of the diaspora space in which heterogeneity and diversity are recognized (Hall 1990; Gordon and Anderson 2003). As a concept, it does not transcend differences of race, class, gender, and sexuality, and is incapable of standing alone as an epistemological or historical category of analysis, separate and distinct from these interrelated categories. As well, it presents models that privilege the geographical, political, cultural, and subjective spaces of the home-nation as an authentic space of belonging and civic participation, while devaluing and bastardizing the states of displacement or dislocation, rendering them inauthentic places of residence (Braziel and Mannur 2003).
These recent developments in the theoretical articulation of the term “diaspora” are highly relevant when one considers the populations that reside in the island states of the Caribbean. The people of the Caribbean islands and the communities of Caribbean immigrants abroad present particular challenges to the use of the diaspora concept as a point departure, and they have been the basis of theorizing about the concept by scholars such as Hall, Gilroy and others. This is so because different segments of these populations can be placed among those larger diasporic groups. In particular, segments of the immigrant Caribbean communities that are of Indian (East Indian) descent may be positioned within an Indian Diaspora, and those of African origin within the African Diaspora. And since there has been significant genetic mixing among the different original groups, there exists large proportions of these populations that may be characterized as hybrid or “dougla.” It is therefore difficult to place such persons in the traditional diasporic groups. Thus, since these communities are not homogeneous in terms of places of origin, it becomes complicated to speak of a Caribbean Diaspora in the same terms as traditionally recognized African or Indian diasporic groups. The concept of a Caribbean Diaspora is therefore one in which diversity is of necessity embraced alongside unity.

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27 Dougla is a term used in Trinidad to refer to individuals of mixed descent, particularly those of mixed African and Indian heritage.
The Embrace of Diversity within the Steelband Movement

In its earliest form, the steelpan emerged as a makeshift object used for musical purposes (Nketia 1986). Because of the outlawing of African drums in the 19th century by the colonial authorities, the practice of making “something from nothing” (Brown 1990) gained prominence within the communities of the formerly enslaved in Trinidad, particularly during Carnival. This led to the development of the tamboo bamboo bands, and it is within these bands that the prototypical steelband instrument emerged. Tamboo bamboo bands embody the percussive performance aesthetic of West African drumming, with different lengths of bamboo tubing of varying pitch range articulating repeated patterns to create the musical texture of the ensemble. These ensembles included the metallic percussive instruments amongst which the early steelpan was included. As such their use was primarily geared at enhancing the percussive texture of the tamboo bamboo ensembles.

Frances Henry notes that the steelband has been influenced by the Orisha religion. For instance the “engine room,” the section that provides the rhythmic drive to the music of the steelband and features metal percussive instruments, has been regarded as confirmation of the presence of the Orisha god Ogun, who is the god of iron (Henry 2003, 182-183). This conclusion is arrived at because of the known involvement of practitioners of the Orisha faith in the early steel band movement. One such individual was the late Andrew Beddoe, a respected drummer and cultural artiste of Trinidad.
Speaking of his experience in the early days of the Silhouettes steelband in Petit Bourg Trinidad, Mr. Munroe of the Sesame Flyers in Brooklyn made the following observation:

If you didn’t have a shango drummer in your rhythm section you couldn’t really have the type of tempo that you needed to get your band going. The whole, basically the whole rhythm section played shango drums...One guy...Jackal, he was a tremendous shango drummer. He was involved with the shango culture and he was also one of the main men in the rhythm section. And... a guy by the name of ... Marshall... he was another tremendous shango drummer...without those guys you had no real tempo in your musical rendition. (Munroe 2006, interview)

Such active participation on the part of Orisha practitioners, coupled with the practice of utilization of makeshift instruments, described as one of the traditional characteristics of music making in West Africa (Nketia 1986), point to the significant influence of a West African musical aesthetic on the emerging steelband. Out of those beginnings, following the discovery that it was possible to tune these impromptu instruments, the growth of the instrument as it is known today commenced. And within this growth process other elements were added to the original African percussive aesthetic.

David Beriss has noted how Martinicans in France have had a history of the embrace of hybridity as a way to gain access and advancement within the French political and social system. They have adopted the tenets of French society while steadfastly attempting to maintain traditional values, practices and performance aesthetics that they
cherish as Martinican. In so doing a French Martinican creole culture has evolved, and this culture is having its impact on mainland France (Beriss 2004). The history of the steelband movement has its parallels. Early steelband music, emanating from amongst the lower classes of the society, was considered to be noisy and uncouth, while the players were regarded as vagabonds (Steumpfle 1995). Thus early in its development hegemonic positions of the upper classes, with regard to music, were brought to bear on the steelband movement. The drive to produce an instrument capable of reproducing the tonal qualities of Western European art and popular music ensued. This has resulted in an instrument in which the West African percussive drumming aesthetic is melded with the tonal and harmonic sensibilities of Europe. It also resulted in a great measure of appreciation and respect for the steelpan practitioners and the instrument, and western art music has been performed on the instrument since the 1950s. In many respects the western European perspective on music has held hegemonic sway in areas such as tuning and harmony since that time.

This embrace of the western musical aesthetic is to a large measure responsible for the tremendous dispersal of the steelband around the world. Unlike many other “world music” instruments that have maintained their special tuning, the steelpan can be accommodated within any western musical ensemble. This is because its tuning has been developed in that direction from its earliest days. The words of Mr. Franklyn about deceased Rudolph Charles, one of the revered bandleaders and tuners in Trinidad, are instructive in this regard. Mr. Franklyn states:
His whole idea was the conventional orchestra have so many instruments, and ... all the steelband had was the tenor pan, double tenor, guitar pan, a cello pan and bass; and he wanted to imitate, a pan to imitate every instrument in the conventional orchestra; not just with plenty pans but with different tones. So he came up with the idea of these four-pan, call them a quadraphonic that would imitate a baritone saxophone. (Gerald 2006, interview)

Further,

Rudolf used to do bass, but he didn't used to do all the bass. He is also responsible for the nine bass. He tuned them himself... in 1975 because he wanted to do something more, because the whole thing was he was imitating; trying to get the pan bass to sound like string bass, with the resonance. Pan bass have a sudden effect – doop, but there was not resonance in the note and the only way for you to get that resonance you had to go down to the low, even if you can't hear the low note from close up, you would feel it and when you go off you would hear the note. And the only way he could have get that was to go down; was to put three notes on one pan. So with the nine bass he put three notes on six and then the other three, he put four notes.

Mr. Franklyn goes on:

In 1975 he decided to put three notes on all the pans. That was the creation of the twelve bass...You see you have three notes on the six bass, but you
might have two B and one E or something like that. He put one bass would be A...You have an octave A, you have a middle range A, and then you have a depth A...and since there are twelve notes in music ...that was the creation of the twelve bass...a lot of people don't understand why he did it; is not just for plenty pan you know; because he was imitating ah mean a tell you ... he was into music...So he had to go down deep to get that, you couldn't go up because the six bass were already up so what you wanted was depth, so when you played – boomm - in order to get that you had to go down, you had to go down. (Gerald 2006, interview)

These remembrances of Rudolph Charles, departed leader of the Desperadoes Steel Orchestra, point to the general aesthetic drive that has consumed the production of tonal quality in the steelband movement. It is evidence of the embrace of the accepted norms of western tonality. This has led to the enhancement of the instrument’s capabilities in the reproduction of western art and popular music, and has allowed this instrument that originated out of African percussive practices to be so widely accepted globally. At the same time the steelband continues to be used in its original performance context, on the streets during the festivities of Carnival. And this is greatly evident in Brooklyn’s J’ouvert celebrations. It brings to the fore the instrument's duality of purpose and the hybridity that it embodies. It is also evidence of the diversity that permeates diasporic spaces and the melding that often results in such spaces.
As a metaphor for diaspora, the steelband therefore embodies and reflects the tenets of this longstanding notion. Its history and development incorporates the dispersal, emergence of a cultural identity abroad based on origin, and a disadvantageous social condition in which steelbands suffer as victims of adverse, often antagonistic, environments. Additionally, the steelpan as an instrument and the ensembles as organizations, have adopted practices that reveal its embrace of mixture and diversity. This positions the steelband in the context of the more recent discourse on the notion of “diaspora” as a space in which admixture occurs and hybridity emerges.

Diaspora Discourse among Afro-Caribbean People in New York

There have been varying discourses and levels of consciousness about Africa as the homeland that have emanated from within the diasporic spaces of the Caribbean and the New World in general. For instance, sections of the African Diaspora in the New World have generated a number of myths about its origins. There is the example of Haiti where the myths of neg Ginin and neg Congo have been used to place the origin of Haitians in the African regions of Guinea and the Congo respectively. Associated with these are the spirits of Afro-Haitian religion, Iwa Ginin and Iwa Congo (Cohen 1997). This notion of a homeland, a place of origin, has been given other concrete locations, so there have been movements of return. There is Freetown in Sierra Leone, where Western Christianized returnees from England, the USA, Canada and Jamaica were sent under the sponsorship of the British
abolitionists during the 18th and early 19th centuries. And, there is the case of Liberia, where the Americo-Liberians returned from America (Harris 1993; Cohen 1997). Such instances of literal “return” have served to reinforce notions of “origin.” But by far the most significant notions of the African homeland were imbricated in “Ethiopia,” which was seen as the heartland of African civilization. And this is ever more clearly seen in the case of Jamaican Rastafarianism, whose precursor in Jamaica was “Ethiopianism” (Cohen 1997).

Further, solidarity movements and ideological movements have emanated from amongst various African diasporic groups. For instance, in response to the notion that Africa signified enslavement, poverty, denigration, exploitation, white superiority, the loss of language and the loss of self-respect, Marcus Garvey appealed to the desperate need to escape this abasement and self hatred and to express self-esteem and dignity. Garveyism created a court of Ethiopia with dukes, duchesses and knights of the Distinguished Order of Ethiopia. As well, W. E. B. DuBois in his writings theorized that there should be a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members worldwide, and that there should be a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in the common fate among diasporic Africans. He became a central figure in the Pan-Africanist movement, a political endeavor that also excited Afro-Caribbean visionaries. Other manifestations of solidarity on the part of New World Africans took on a more cultural than political appearance. In the francophone Caribbean, Aimé Césaire made his spiritual journey in Return to my native land (1956). He was also an important influence on the
Negritude Movement, and had a continuing dialogue with Africans and the peoples of African descent in literary and political journals such *Présence Africaine* (Harris 1993; Skinner 1993; Shepperson 1993; Cohen 1997).

In addition, there is the issue of shared cultural/material production, the extraordinary cultural achievements of those of African descent in the New World, particularly in dance, literature, architecture, sculpture and arts. Most notable in this regard has been in the development of the musical traditions that have been recognized as emanating from within the African diasporic populations in the USA, South America and the Caribbean. These styles of music now have an appreciative following in most countries, and include jazz in its many varied manifestations, the spirituals, the blues, ragtime, gospel music, and rhythm and blues. As well there are those styles emanating from the diaspora, such as samba in Brazil, calypso in Trinidad, and ska and reggae in Jamaica. Bob Marley’s music is replete with explicit diasporic themes (Cohen 1997). Themes such as “exodus,” “buffalo soldier,” “Ethiopia,” and “Babylon” are omnipresent in the lyrical content of his songs, whose popularity speaks volumes about the overriding concern for matters of the African diaspora that have been developed and expressed in the Caribbean.

A Caribbean Diaspora

In terms of the Caribbean and how the region relates to the issues raised by the concept of “diaspora,” consideration must also be given to the question of whether the Caribbean peoples who have migrated abroad constitute a “new,”
“postcolonial,” “hybrid” cultural diaspora. In doing so one must confront the problems posed by this question. Firstly, virtually everyone in the Caribbean came from somewhere else, and this may disqualify any consideration being given to the idea of a Caribbean Diaspora. Settlement and immigrant societies are normally conceived as points of arrival, not departure. They are viewed as sites of a renewed collectivity, not of dissolution, emigration and dispersion. Secondly, the peoples of the Caribbean may be thought of as parts of other Diasporas, but Caribbean people of Indian and African origin in recent years have been disinterested in returning to India or to Africa (Cohen 1997).

This second problem may be challenged. For while there may not be expressions of physical return to Africa and India, both of these communities of people have maintained and developed spiritual linkages with their historical places of origin. This is particularly evident in Trinidad where there has arisen increasing cultural cooperation and exchange between the segments of the East Indian community and India. For instance, there is an active chapter of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin in Trinidad, and Hindu religious festivals are increasingly celebrated on the island state. There is also the celebration of the Emancipation from slavery with increased and ongoing participation of cultural and political delegations from the African continent and other African diasporic spaces. For example, the celebrations of 2007 were graced by the presence of the President of Uganda, and the President of Ghana was the head dignitary invited to the 2008 celebrations, which saw performances by the national performance company of
Uganda. Based on the evidence of these blossoming linkages, there has been and continues to be interest in return, even if these may be expressed in more symbolic ways.

Nonetheless it has been argued that a distinctive Caribbean diasporic identity can be discerned, and Caribbean identity cannot be rendered simply as a transposition of an African identity to the New World because the rupture of slavery and the admixture of other peoples built into a Caribbean identity a sense of hybridity, diversity and difference.

Diaspora does not refer us to those scattered tribes whose identity can only be secured in relation to some sacred homeland to which they must at all cost return, even if it means pushing other people into the sea. This is the old, the imperializing, the hegemonizing form of ‘ethnicity’. We have seen the fate of the people of Palestine at the hands of this backward conception of diaspora (and the complicity of the West with it). The diaspora experience as I intend it here is defined not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of identity which lives through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (Stuart Hall 1990 in Cohen 1997, 138)
Hall is concerned with the diasporic identity that Caribbean people created within the geographical bounds of the Caribbean itself, but one must also inquire into the degree to which Caribbean immigrants have affirmed, reproduced and created a diasporic identity in the places to which they subsequently moved. And this study of the West Indian Carnival celebrations in Brooklyn embraces such an inquiry.

Cohen makes the case that despite different destinations and experiences of Caribbean peoples abroad, they remain an exemplary case of a cultural diaspora. This arises from their common history of forcible dispersion through the slave trade that is still shared by virtually all people of African descent, despite their subsequent liberation, settlement and citizenship in the various parts of the New World. This circumstance is due partly to a matter of visibility, as in the case of those of African descent for whom skin color normally remains a mark. The deployment of skin color in many societies as a signifier of status, power and opportunity, make it impossible for many people of African descent to avoid racial stigmatization (Cohen 1997).

But being phenotypically African and being conscious of racism are, in themselves, insufficient to assign the label “cultural diaspora” to Afro-Caribbean people. There must be evidence of:

1. Cultural retention or affirmation of an African identity;

2. Interests in a literal or symbolic “return”

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28 Herskovits 1947.
3. Cultural artifacts, products and expressions that show shared concerns and cross-influences between Africa, the Caribbean and the destination countries of Caribbean peoples; and

4. Indications that ordinary Caribbean people abroad, in their attitudes, migration patterns and social conduct, behave in ways consistent with the idea of a “cultural diaspora” (Cohen 1997).

Thus, Cohen clearly aligns the notion of Caribbean cultural Diaspora with that of an African Diaspora, and in so doing he appears to be paying insufficient regard to the diversity of the peoples of the Caribbean region upon which Hall and others relied in their articulation of “hybridity” as a salient characteristic of Caribbean Diasporic identity.

One Caribbean People

It is common knowledge that the Caribbean consists of separate island states each populated by admixtures of different peoples – Africans, Indians, Europeans (Spanish, French, Dutch), and Native Peoples. However, despite major points of divergence, there have existed, and continue to exist, many points around which the concept of one Caribbean people has developed and flourished. Primary in this regard is the common history of the region in terms of colonialism, slavery and indentureship, and the political struggles that were waged to overcome these and establish politically independent nations. In the English-speaking Caribbean, with attainment of political independence by many of the islands during the late 1950s
and 1960s, there have been ongoing attempts by the various regional governments to foster increased communication and cooperation.

This is reflected in the failed attempts in the early ‘60s to establish a Federation of states, and the existence of CARICOM (The Caribbean Community and Common Market) through which cooperation in all spheres is fostered, but particularly in the economic trade and cultural spheres. While initially incorporated by the English speaking isles of the region, increasing efforts have been made in recent years to include Haiti and Cuba in the affairs of the Caribbean Community and Common Market, and regional governments have made moves to increase their cooperation with these two Caribbean neighbors. For instance, in 2003 the Trinidad and Tobago government signed an agreement with Cuba that allowed Cuban doctors and nurses to work at health institutions in Trinidad and Tobago in order to fill a void in the medical services of the twin-island state created largely by the migration of trained medical personal to the large cities of North America and the United Kingdom. This cooperation is also most vividly seen in the CARIFESTA, the Caribbean Festival of Arts that was first held in 1972 and its 10th installment was held in mainland Guyana in 2008.

In this festival contingents of artistes in all spheres of the arts are sent from each island state to participate and celebrate the unity within the diversity of the region, the motto of Carifesta X being “One People, One Purpose, Our Culture, Our Life.” It must be noted that this type of cultural sharing exists outside of these large
forums such as CARIFESTA. In particular, musicians have long traversed the various isles; a fact that was made even clearer to me in my conversation with Clarence Curvan and Pelham Goddard in Brooklyn in August -September, 2007.29 And this musical exchange continues. For example, in Trinidad there are numerous shows held year-round in which many Jamaican reggae and dancehall artistes are the featured performers. A few of these artistes even appeared on the platforms of a couple of the political parties that contested the national election in November 2007. In addition, many calypso and soca artistes from the various islands perform in Trinidad during the annual carnival season, while Trinidadian artistes participate in the many regional carnivals. In the field of sport, there is the West Indies Cricket team, which has been a symbol of Caribbean (West Indian) pride, and around which the region had rallied in its various cricketing duels with the England, the mother country of the colonial era, Australia, India, and Pakistan, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka. The University of the West Indies with campuses in Barbados, Jamaica and Trinidad is another site in which the existence of a Caribbean People is articulated, where the past and present achievements of Caribbean scholars are celebrated and advanced.

In addition to these areas, it is important to note also that there has been significant population movement within the region. While not mass movements, people of the various islands have steadily relocated to different islands, often in search of employment. This has been so since the 19th century (Rohlehr 1990). In

29 Interviews conducted in September and August 2007, respectively.
Trinidad, with the development of the oilfields in the first half of the 20th century and the presence of the US military bases during the Second World War, there was an influx of migrants from other islands. And, this had continued in large measure because of the seeming prosperity of the island as a result of its oil and natural gas resources. There are many Trinidian families with relatives on the isles of Grenada, St. Vincent, Barbados, and St. Lucia and elsewhere.

Hence, I am in general agreement with the view of Hall, that there has developed, within the confines of the Caribbean space, a Caribbean diasporic identity with which the peoples of the region, irrespective of their particular shade of diversity, can identify. However, it is also important to note that this “Caribbeanness” may not be viewed as being separate from the other notions of Diaspora – African, Indian, and Chinese – in the Caribbean context. For while mixture and hybridity are celebrated in this Caribbean Identity, “Indianness” or “Africanness” are recognized and celebrated as part of being Caribbean, and examples among the East Indian descendants and the celebrants of Emancipation in Trinidad bear testimony to this. Thus Caribbean people embody a multifaceted diasporic identity that may be directed at island state, the region as a whole, or the putative homeland origin.

Further, in the case of the Caribbean community in New York, and I am referring here to the those Caribbean people of African origin in New York, while their “Caribbeanness” is clearly articulated, as in the Brooklyn Carnival celebrations
which is a site that facilitates this, linkages are clearly made to the overarching
concept of African Diaspora in America, and it is in this context that I am inclined to
agree with those criteria that Cohen sets out, namely: evidence of cultural retention or affirmation of an African identity; interests in a literal or symbolic “return”; cultural artifacts, products and expressions that show shared concerns and cross-influences between Africa, the Caribbean and the destination countries of Caribbean peoples.

Notions of Diaspora in Brooklyn

Expressions of Shared Concerns

Shared concerns and expressions of the Caribbean people in New York, and the members of the African American community are articulated and seen in the various newspaper publications that are found in Brooklyn. These newspapers are invariably filled with news from the various islands of the Caribbean, including Cuba and the South American nation states Guyana and Venezuela. The topics cover the gamut of politics, culture, economy, and sports among others. The Caribbean American Weekly of Aug 25-Sept 08, 2007, is significant in this regard. This issue of the paper makes some very significant links between the Caribbean people and the African American community by carrying feature articles that highlight current U S Presidential candidate, Barack Obama, Now President.  

Civil Rights activist and martyr Medgar
Evers, Marcus Garvey, murdered Guyanese and Caribbean scholar Walter Rodney, Bahamian cultural icon and actor Sidney Poitier, and renowned calypsonian the Mighty Sparrow.\textsuperscript{31}

The headline of this issue of the paper proclaims that “\textbf{Mighty Sparrow, Calypso King of the world endorses Obama},” and it is accompanied with a picture of Obama, Sparrow and others. In the article related to this, it is reported that at a brief executive meeting held at the Marriott Hotel at Brooklyn Bridge (Aug. 22, 2007) Sparrow presented Barack Obama with a copy of a calypso that he composed and recorded as a tribute to Obama.\textsuperscript{32} The song is an exposé, which takes the listener through Obama’s humble beginnings and his rise to prominence, and it presents him as a family man, a towering intellectual, a tremendous grassroots community leader and legislator, and now progressive Presidential candidate with a solid agenda for real comprehensive reforms. The article further points out that in more ways than one, this song captures the sentiment of many Caribbean-Americans interviewed by the \textit{Caribbean American Weekly}. And like the Mighty Sparrow, who is of Grenadian/Trinidadian origin, most of those interviewed about their opinions of Barack Obama, are also of Caribbean-American descent. The chorus of the song \textit{Barack the Magnificent} states:

\begin{verbatim}

32 Since that time numerous other compositions by Caribbean artistes have been produced in support of Obama.
\end{verbatim}
Barack! Barack! He is fighting for openness and honesty in government;
Barack – is doggedly defiant; phenomenal strength; and wisdom beyond comment. 33

An article honoring the life and work of Marcus Garvey celebrates him as being “truly a good man, who gave hope to a lot of black people and the black race as a whole” (Mangatal 2007). Garvey is given recognition as the first National Hero of Jamaica, and it is noted that he said:

Therefore, the American Negroes and the West Indian Negroes are one, and they are relics of the great African race which was brought into the Western World and kept here for 400 years. (Mangatal 2007)

For his part, Walter Rodney is recognized as a sociological-historian of world repute, and the relevance of Rodney’s scholarship and activism is examined. It is pointed out that he was specifically interested in examining the causes and methods of oppression, and he painstakingly established through his research the world historical context and means of exploitation of third world societies, especially the colonial societies within Africa, the Americas and the Caribbean. Two of his most potent socio-historical publications are: How Europe Underdeveloped Africa and the History of the Guyanese Working People (Mohamed 2007).

Embedded within this issue of the Caribbean American Weekly is a supplement that is produced by CARE, Concerned Americans for Racial Equality

(Issue: 13), and it carries the motto: “Different Shades, Scattered Globally, Same Goal – A Take Power Publication In Black and White.” On a page headed: “Civil Rights Leader Profile,” there is an article on Medgar Evers that is fixed to follow in sequence those on the three leaders mentioned above. It therefore presents an interesting continuity on a theme that seems to focus on leaders of the African Diaspora in the New World. The article goes on to point out that many of the rights we have today in the United States are because of leaders like Medgar Evers, who gave their lives to the hope of a better future for the subsequent generations. It notes that the legacy of Medgar Evers is much like the legacy of the many other African American leaders of his era, and it is because of the efforts of Medgar Evers, supported by the NAACP, that the US college school system became desegregated. This is the most important achievement of Evers’ life-long commitment to activism. It is further stated that it is important that Africans, African Americans, Caribbeans, Africans of the Diaspora, not only live up to the dreams and aspirations of those great leaders that came before, but they should also aim higher than even those leaders would have imagined (Joseph 2007).

On a page headed: “Voices of Freedom,” CARE celebrates Sir Sidney Poitier as the acclaimed Academy Award actor, director, writer, humanitarian and diplomat, who throughout the 1950s, made several of the most controversial movies addressing racial equality. The first one, *Cry, the Beloved Country*, focused on South African apartheid, and two later films, *Blackboard Jungle* and *The Defiant Ones*, focused on the struggle for racial equality. Poitier received his first Academy Award
nomination for *The Defiant Ones*. He became the first African American superstar to receive an Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in *Lilies of the Field*, 1963 (Kircelin 2007).

The *Caribbean American Weekly* traversed the Eastern Parkway on Labor Day 2007 as part of the West Indian American Labor Day Carnival Parade with a truck that carried a huge banner announcing Sparrow’s endorsement of Barack Obama for the Presidency of the United States, and this particular issue of the newspaper was distributed to the strains of the latest carnival music. These articles, honoring individuals, who have led the African diaspora in the New World in differing ways, clearly connect those of African descent in the New World to Africa. They emphasize that there continue to exist points of common concern between the peoples of the Caribbean, those of Caribbean origin in New York, African Americans and the African continent.

Symbolic Links.

It is important to note that while these linkages are steadfastly made between those of the Caribbean of African descent and other groups of the African Diaspora, the Caribbean community in New York has not moved in a direction to be subsumed under the all embracing banner of African –American. In fact, it has sought to maintain its ties with the Caribbean region as a whole. More specifically, groups have sought to hold the respective islands from which they came close to
their heart. The organization of sports in Brooklyn and the Bronx is one of the avenues in which the links with the Caribbean home is continually nurtured, as a report on the soccer competitions in New York among the Caribbean community testifies.

The Caribbean Life newspaper of August 29th 2007 states that on Sunday, August 26th, Mandela, the top team in the Bronx league, lined up with Jamaican Premier League players included in the team. As well, Arantes and Caribbean United battled in overtime to decide who will advance, and as the Caribbean Cup climaxes, the defending champion Jamaica will try to retain its title when it takes on a strong Grenada team. Jamaica, which defeated Haiti in the quarterfinals, took on a spirited St. Lucia team that reached the semi-finals by defeating St. Kitts. And, Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines played to a goalless draw (Horne 2007).

This summary of the report can be compared to a news item on Brooklyn cricket competition that was carried on one of the television cable channels, and which I was fortunate to hear during my stay in New York in August 2007. It was reported that Guyana was victorious over Trinidad in the finals of the cricket competition. Thus if one is not made aware, you may be led to believe that these competitions are actually between representative teams of the island nations of the Caribbean that are participating in a Caribbean regional competition. By retaining the island nation names these participants reaffirm and maintain connections with their homes, the various islands of the Caribbean, and they contribute to the
solidification of transnational existence of the community across borders and seas. And, this is not just symbolic. For as is the case of Mandela, which actually lined up with members that played in the Jamaican Premier Soccer league in order to undoubtedly bolster their competitive edge, it also ensures that bonds to the native Jamaican homeland continue to be solidified. Similar practice exists among the various steel and mas’ bands whose ranks are strengthened by the direct participation of players, who come from the Caribbean for the annual Labor Day Carnival celebrations.

The name Mandela must be noted in the context of the issue of diaspora that is being discussed here. It not only references the omnipotent figure of the individual that is Nelson Mandela in the recent history and politics of the state of South Africa and the African continent as a whole, but it establishes a symbolic link with the Africa homeland of the diaspora. Further, it points to the resistance that is associated with the man and the South African people in relation to the oppressive and discriminatory system of apartheid. This resistance resonates in the history of the struggles of the Maroons of Jamaica and all those who fought the system of slavery throughout the region and the New World. And it continues to reverberate among those of Caribbean origin who simply refuse to be subsumed by the dominant cultural paradigms in the space that is the United States of America.
Further, there is the term “Guyaspora”\textsuperscript{34} that was used by the Guyanese Culture minister in appealing for the involvement of the diaspora in Carifesta 2008, and calling on Guyanese abroad to return home to give support to the event. There is also the term among the Haitian community – “Jaspora,” which is a Haitian colloquial expression for the word “Diaspora”. It refers to Haitians or sometimes to those of Haitian ancestry living abroad (Minsky 2007, 51)\textsuperscript{35}. These terms perform a similar function as the retention of the island names does in the case of the sporting competition mentioned above, and as in the role played by the proliferation of national flags of the Caribbean nation states that are waved, worn or used to adorn vehicles in Brooklyn, particularly during the festive time of the Labor Day Carnival celebrations. They serve to solidify the Caribbean cultural diasporal linkages in terms of the particularity of each of the nation states of the region, but they also point to the broad African diaporal links as well. While different groups of Caribbean people pursue these practices in order to cling to their particular piece of the Caribbean pie, they may also articulate deeper ties.

\textsuperscript{34} Caribbean Life, August 29, 2007: 86.

\textsuperscript{35} This is a report on the play “Jaspora” which was staged by Nancy Morricette. It is based on her personal experience. As a child she went to a primarily Black elementary school in Miami where Haitian and Haitian-American students took periods a day in “Haitian school”, a trailer on the school grounds where the classes were conducted in kreyol (creole) and French. They were not fully accepted by the African American students.
Cultural Artifacts and Religious Paraphernalia

I came upon the akwaaba dolls\(^\text{36}\) (Fig. 3.10) in the form of a letter holder at a home in Brooklyn. The owner was not aware as to precisely what these dolls represented, but she had received the letter holder as a gift from a co-worker. As health workers, they take part in a charitable organization that makes visits to Ghana, and the letter holder was purchased in Ghana on one such visit and presented to the owner. In that same house there was also a small altar located in the vicinity of the front door (see Fig. 3.11).

\(^{36}\) Wooden dolls associated with female initiation and puberty rites among the Akan of Ghana.
Fig. 3.10: A letter holder made in the image of the Ghanaian *Akwaaba* dolls

(Photograph by Ken Archer, Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 3.11: An altar; note the elephant, symbol of Africa, on bottom shelf.

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
The altar in Fig.3.11 looks very much like those that may be found in the context of the Orisha religious worship, and like the akwaaba dolls it conjures up connections between communities on the African continent and those of African descendants in the New World. The individual at whose home I observed these artifacts is a follower of both the Catholic and Spiritual Baptists faiths, and it was from her that I also got a copy of Orisha songs that were recorded in recent years by Trinidadian Orisha priestess and soca/calypso performer, Ella Andall. I learnt as well, that the Spiritual/Shouter Baptist Faith, which developed in the Caribbean, and has been recognized as one of the African-influenced religions in the circum-Caribbean region in which cultural retention and reinterpretation of African ritual practices are considered to reside (Herskovits 1947, Henry 2003), had built a formalized structure in the New York area. It has been given official recognition by the City of New York.

There is a proliferation of these churches in the Brooklyn community and I had the pleasure of being invited to attend the service of one such church, St. Michael’s located on Brooklyn Avenue, Brooklyn. A gentleman from the isle of St. Vincent, heads this church. The Mother of the church, his wife, is a Trinidadian, while there are some members of the congregation from Jamaica and a few other Caribbean isles. Despite its small size, this church, taken together with the body of churches to which it belongs, is testimony to the links that have been established

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37 I say body because these churches do not operate in isolation, but in fact the congregants aid each other by promoting and attending each others functions and funding raising ventures, and during the service that I
between the people of the Caribbean isles, in this case particularly those of African
descent, and these links continue to flourish in the space that is Brooklyn, New York.

In describing the physical setting of Baptist Churches, Mervyn Williams
recognizes the importance of the center pole to the physical lay out within the
church. This pole is situated in the exact center of the church’s structure and it is
supposed to represent the “spirit of the Godhead” from which all power emanates. It
may stand vertically from the floor to the ceiling; it may be about five feet tall, or it
may be a small circular base of three or more tiers (Williams 1985, 67). At the St.
Michael’s Spiritual Baptist Church on Brooklyn Avenue, Brooklyn, there was a center
pole about five feet in height (See Fig. 3.12). Around this center pole were a number
of ritual items, some of which were also identified by Williams in his work.

Clearly evident at St. Michael’s were the brass bells, which were rung
intermittently by some members. The use of these bells acknowledges “the presence
of the Holy Spirit, paying respect to the Blessed Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit)
or simply calling members to pray” (Williams 1985, 68). Williams also mentioned
the presence of a “lotar” and “water glass” among the ritual paraphernalia. And

attend the leader took the opportunity to announce upcoming events hosted by other churches, and
implored his congregation to attend and make these events a success.
these items were also located around the base of the center pole at St. Michael’s (See Fig. 3.12). The “lotar” is a brass vase commonly used for worship in the homes and mandirs of Hindus. In the Baptist church “it contains water, flowers and a lighted candle” and it is used together with the “water glass” in some of the ritual practices of the church (Williams 1985, 68).

A steering wheel is seen at the top of the center pole in Fig.3.12. It is a common part of the ritual paraphernalia of these Spiritual Baptist churches. Members usually pray at the center pole upon entering the church, and they then spin the wheel in a counter-clockwise fashion. “On other occasions the wheel may be spun by anyone who is so moved by the spirit. Most members seem to think of the wheel as symbolic of setting certain positive vibrations in motion” (Williams 1985, 68). During my visit to St. Michael’s in August 2006, I observed that the leader of the church occasionally spun the wheel as he preached.

Another ritual object observed at St. Michael’s was the broom, which is seen resting on an opened bible in Fig. 3.14. The mother of the church said the following in giving a description of its symbolism and importance:

The bible symbolize the word of god; the broom can be used for many things.
You use the broom to sweep. You use the broom for healing; the broom could
be a sword... more than one thing; just as how you get it to do, you use it accordingly to the will of god. 

In explaining aspects of dance within Orisha religious practice, dancer Gene Toney pointed out:

We have Shakpana. Shakpana is the god of vengeance and medicines.
Shakpana dances with a broom. (Toney 2006, interview)

This association of the broom with the god of vengeance and medicines parallels those made with healing and the sword by the Mother of St. Michael’s, and points to commonality in some of the practices and beliefs within these religious faiths.

These religions have been recognized as spaces in which the hybridity and admixture characteristic of diasporic spaces are observed. In his explication of the concept of “syncretism” as it relates to the continuation of West African cultural practices in New World, Herskovits cited the identification of African deities with Catholic saints in Catholic countries of the New World as an example of the process of syncretism. For instance, in his work *Trinidad Village*, he noted the relationship of the gods of the Shango/Orisha faith and those of Catholicism, as well as the practice as expressed in the “mourning ground” observed by the Shouters, in which the retention of the African requirement of initiation into religious groups through identification with the Christian concept of sanctification is achieved through preparation for baptism (Herskovits 1947, 327-33).

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38 Conversation with the Mother of St. Michael’s Spiritual Baptist Church, Brooklyn, 2006.
Frances Henry corroborates this and points out that the Orisha faith in Trinidad has incorporated Christian, Hindu and kabbalah together with African elements. In the earlier period of its practice in Trinidad the main Christian elements derived from Roman Catholicism. These included Catholic prayers such as the Lord’s Prayer and the Hail Mary, which were routinely recited. The entire Litany of the Saints was sometimes recited and hymns derived from the Catholic mass were sung. She notes that most of the Orisha members were also Catholic and there was considerable multiple religiosity (Henry, 2003, 137). As well, she gives a detailed list of the major Orisha “powers” or deities and the Christian saintly counterparts with which they are identified. For example: Ogun, the highest deity in the Orisha pantheon, the god of war and iron, is identified with St. Michael; Osain, the god of the jungle and bush, a “bush doctor”, with St. Francis; and Shango, god of lightning and thunder, with St. John the Baptist (Henry 2003, 22-29). Gene Toney confirms this in part, he says:

Well, the same people who are Catholics... some way along the line, they have Baptist parents, or they grow up as Baptist before being Catholic. Catholicism was forced on the Orishas... and what they used to do, when they ban the rhythms and they ban them from keeping they meetings and thing... the Orishas... substitute their deities for the Catholic saints... So then we have like Ogun, who dance with the sword, you call him St. Michael, ‘cause... Saint Michael is the archangel, the same figure. So, they have similarities between the Orisha and the Catholic saints; and this was all in all to get through and
continue with they meetings and thing; is a sort-ah cover-up... with the
system. (Toney 2006, interview)

In addition, Henry deals extensively with the Spiritual or Shouter Baptists, a
religion derived from the Protestant stream of Christianity and is considered to
incorporate African influences. St. Michael’s in Brooklyn, New York belongs to this
faith. This religion has been incorporated with an archdiocese in New York during
the last quarter century. Henry notes that some measure of “syncretism” has taken
place between this faith and the Orisha, to the extent that the controversial term
“Shango Baptist” is used in reference to some members of the faith who may be seen
as straddling the two faiths in the practice. In this regard, Gene Toney, one of
Trinidad’s leading folk dance instructors, who described himself as a Spiritual
Baptist, makes the following observation:

In Trinidad... some of the slaves came from the Yoruba tribe...The Yoruba is
the one responsible for some of the religious stigma in Trinidad and Tobago.
From the Yoruba derive the Shango and the Spiritual Baptists... most likely
the spiritual Baptists came out of the Shango. Now, today we have Baptists
who take to Christ and we call them Spiritual Baptists. We have those who
remain in the authentic faith, the Orishas, and we call them Shango, although
Shango is just a deity. The real name is the Orishas... it have some people
callin’ themselves Shango Baptists. (Toney 2006, interview)
He continues:

So, but Shango? To me there is nothing like Shango Baptists. Is either you are a Shango or a Baptist; because Baptists is who take to Christ, and Shango is a non-Christian religion. Shango... the Orishas, they worship the ancestors; ancestral worship just like how the Native American Indians do... is a similar faith...how they worship the ancestors... So, to me it have nothing like a Shango Baptists. It is either you are a Shango or a Baptist; and this faith was derived from the Yorubas... Now, I; I am a Spiritual Baptist; a Christian Baptist – so to speak. (Toney 2006, interview)

He adds further:

... worshiping in the authentic way... if you read what Christ say ... that he is the sacrifice; that you don’t need no sacrifice again... but some ah them still sacrifice. They does kill goats and thing, when they having feast... But then Christ say he was the ultimate sacrifice. When he shed his blood that was it; you don't need to do that again. That was way down in Moses time and before Christ. Since Christ come, he say he was the ultimate sacrifice so you don't need to do that, but some of them still doing that and preaching Christ. (Toney 2006, interview)

These observations made by Gene reveal some of the mixing that has taken place in the religious practices of these African-derived religions in the Caribbean communities, and they also point to the contradictions that they hold. While Henry
dates the emergence of this Shango Baptist to the late 1950s, members of both faiths were engaged in the practice of attending each others services and events such as feasts prior to that time in the ’30s and ’40s, as is noted by Herskovits (1947). Henry notes:

There actually appears to be an increase in the crossovers between the Orisha and Spiritual Baptism. The old term, “Shango Baptist”, although decried by some, appears to still have salience...The viability of the syncretism is evident in that they have gained strength over the years, with more and more crossovers between Orisha and Baptists appearing at many more shrines. (Henry 2003, 155-56)

She observes some interesting parallels between the two religions: these include use of colors to signify deities and spirits, astral “traveling,” “mournin’” or “putting people on the ground” to bring initiates closer to the spiritual world (Henry 2003, 156).
Fig. 3.12: Center pole at St. Michael's Spiritual Baptist (Photograph by Ken Archer
Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 3.13: Some of the items positioned around the base of the center pole at St. Michael's (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 3.14: Broom on Bible at St. Michael’s Spiritual Baptist Church. (Photograph by Ken Archer, Brooklyn 2006)
The presence of these churches in Brooklyn, and their consolidation into a recognized archdiocese in which members of the Caribbean community participate, is further evidence of the consolidation of a diasporic community of West Indians in New York. Additionally the continued presence of paraphernalia identified above, and their use in the ritual practice of these churches such as St. Michael’s, reveal a continuity among these people that further consolidates the notions of a Caribbean diasporic people, and these faiths have been positioned historically within the African-derived religions in which admixture and diversity have been embraced.

Dance

The medium of dance provides one of the most telling examples of cultural retention and expression through which Caribbean and African diasporic identity is reaffirmed in Brooklyn. In particular, the performances of Caribbean dances put on by the youth of Beacon Summer Camp constitute cultural material or artifact that is illustrative of the diaspora linkages amongst the people of the Caribbean, and with the other groups of the African diaspora. For example, the Caribbean bèlè dance was described as a dance that was infused with the rhythms of the Shango/Orisha ritual in the context of slavery in the Caribbean.\(^\text{39}\) Of the bèlè dance Gene Toney says:

> It have about over eight types of Bèlè. We have, ah could name some … Grand bèlè…Bènè bèlè…the Martinican bèlè …the Congo bèlè, which is from Tobago…the Pique which is a bèlè dance also, but that is a saucy, spicy sort –of

\(^{39}\) Interview with Gene Toney, August 2006.
bèlè dance, a flirtatious sort-a dance. ... The Grand Bèlè was copied; invented by the slaves, copied from the slave masters from a dance called the minuet, a French dance called the minuet … the basis of this rhythm, bèlè, is also the same basis for the Shango or the Orisha beat. (Toney 2006, interview)
Fig. 3.15: Youths perform the bèlè dance at the closing function of the Beacon Summer Camp 2006. Gene and Roxanne Toney, and Billy Sammy accompany them on drums. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)

This understanding therefore posits this dance to be part of the Africa-derived performance continuum to which the Orisha rituals and other practices belong. As well, Herskovits identified the bèlè and the reel dances as the “outstanding rights for the dead” which he observed in Trinidad. And while the reels were danced to the “reel songs of Scottish and Irish derivation, the bèlè was of “a less European type,” that was accompanied by single head, hollow-log drums
(Herskovits 1947, 158-159). John Cowley recognizes the bèlè (also bel air) as one of the Creole drum dances that was performed by the African descendants throughout the 19th century in colonial Trinidad in events such as wakes, “society balls” and commemorative celebrations of the Emancipation, although they were often despised and characterized as obscene by the elite upper class (Cowley 1996). This dance was also one of the dances of the Big Drum dance of Carriacou (Pearse 1956; Mc Daniel 1985), and it is also performed at wakes on the isle of St. Lucia (Guilbault 1987).

As such, it may be considered to be the quintessential Caribbean dance. It has long been regarded as a creolized dance, as Gene mentions, a French dance adopted by enslaved Africans. Authors on the Big Drum dance of Carriacou list this dance among the creolized dances that followed the performance of the nation dances in this festival, and the name “bèlè” has been considered to be a creolized use of the French “bel air.” While this has been the official discourse, I am of the opinion that consideration needs to be given to the fact that Bèlè is also the name of an ethnic group of West Africa, and this may be a possible reason that this dance appeared among the nation dances of the Big Drum festival along with the Cromanti, Igbo, Manding, Akan, Arada and others. In providing a definition of the bèlè Martin states that it is:

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40 Dances hosted by societies/associations to which many Blacks belonged.
A form of dance, originally from the French bel air, known throughout the West Indies. It is possible that it comes from the Bele tribe on the Senegal River, West Africa. (Martin 1998, 221)

Nonetheless, this dance serves as a pivotal cultural marker of common performance heritage shared within in the Caribbean, and it has been transported to metropolitan cities such as New York.
Fig. 3.16: Youths perform an African Dance at the Beacon Camp 2006.

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)

African Dance

The African dance performed at the Beacon Summer camp in 2006, and at the Sesame Flyers Block Party in 2007, consisted of a number of different dance movements that were derived from among the different groups that were brought/came to the Caribbean during the period of slavery and after. Gene Toney
notes that the *yanvolou* is included among the medley of dances performed, and he says:

There are two types of yanvalou, yanvalou doba and yanvalou zepolé. The yanvalou doba is being done in submission to the gods and the yanvalou zepolé is being done to the snake god of fertility, who is Dambala. You see movements; the movements ... Snakelike movements. (Toney 2006, interview)

The origin of the yanvalou can be traced to the Fon of Dahomey. It is an invocation dance/music that begins the Vodun or Rada worship, and its ritual function is to call the *lwa*\(^{41}\) into the presence of the devotees. The yanvalou doba is characterized by undulations that take the shape of sea waves or the crawling of a serpent, and these movements are in accord with the symbols of the two divinities of the Rada rite to which it is linked, Agwe and Danbala (Fluerant 1996).

While Gene speaks of the yanvalou zepolé, Fleurant describes the zepòl, the dance of the shoulders. Its origin also traces to West Africa among the Adja-speaking people of Benin, Ghana, and Togo. This dance is also known as the *yanvalou debout* in Haiti, but in fact there are two main figures of this dance: the vodun or zepòl proper, and the other which is like the yanvalou. In the vodun dance, dancers move their shoulders and imitate the cadence of the yanvalou doba, but do not bend their knees as is done in the doba. The zepòl is the fastest dance of the yanvalou dances,

\(^{41}\) Deity or spirit in the Rada worship.
and is performed to honor all of the Rada lwa with the exception of Marasa and Azaka Mede (Fleurant 1996).

Among the Rada divinities in Haiti, Danbala is the most venerated and is associated with the yanvalou, the snake being the symbol of Danbala and his wife Ayida Wedo. And, Danbala lives in the springs, the rivers, and the lakes (Fleurant 1996). While the snake is the symbol of Danbala, Herskovits noted that in Dahomey all snakes are called Da, but not all are respected. The vodun Da is more than a snake, and embodies the flexible, sinuous and moist qualities of all things. Aido Hwedo, who is the most important in this regard, is also considered to represent wealth, and Dambada represents the spirits of the very old ancestors (Herskovits 1938).

Da …is a vodu who incarnates the quality of the dynamics of life – it is movement, flexility, sinousness, fortune. It manifests itself as serpent, as rainbow, as umbilicus, as plant roots, as the nerves of animal forms, as the gaseous emanations that issue from mountains. It explains how, when an immovable thing like a mountain shows its life, it is the Da within it that actuates it. …Da may be regarded as the embodiment of another philosophical concept growing out of the observation of life itself. (Herskovits 1938 vol. 2, 255)

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42 The Marasa is one of the Rada lwa that is referred to as the cult of the twins, but is also linked to the cult of the dead. Azaka Mede is the lwa associated with agriculture that personifies a humble peasant.

43 The terms Dambada (Herskovits), Danbala (Fleurant), and Dambala (Gene) each refer to the same deity in the Vodun/Rada rites that derived from Dahomey, present-day Benin.
Hence while the yanvalou, as noted by Gene, originates within the context of sacred ritual performance, and the religious concepts associated with it is derived from places such as Dahomey (Benin) and Haiti, it appears recontextualized and reinterpreted in the performance at the youth camp in Brooklyn for entertainment purposes, and to introduce the youth to aspects of their Caribbean cultural heritage. Here it is melded into a medley of other dances of African derivation, the Igbo dance and Mandjiani, as well as the “Black Africa,” a dance with distinct rhythmic drumming patterns that was introduced into Trinidad by renowned Trinidadian dance choreographer Julia Edwards in the 1970s. At the Sesame Flyers Block Party this medley of African dances was performed to open the occasion. I postulate that its performance in this context represented supplication to the ancestors, in the manner of the nation dances of the Big Drum. After its performance, it was followed by a reggae dance and a calypso dance. One might categorize these as the more frivolous dances, also in the manner of the Big Drum. Therefore, this performance also embodies reinterpretation and recontextualization, and serves to connect not only with Africa, after which the medley is titled, but also by mirroring the Big Drum it points to the African diasporic presence in the Caribbean and the Caribbean community in New York.

The limbo dance performed by the Beacon youth must also be included in this context of cultural artifact. Like the bèlè and other dances mentioned, the limbo is also posited among the African-derived cultural performances in the Caribbean.

\[44\] Ibid.
region. It was initially performed in wakes, together with the *bongo*, in the communities of African descendents in honor of the deceased.\(^{45}\) Gene explains his understanding of the *bongo* and *limbo* dances as follows:

The dance that we do in wakes is the *bongo* dance which we, some ah we, call the dance of the dead... *Bongo* is being done like, okay. Like a death sign is a cross (crosses arms) with the skull... So most of the *bongo* steps you might see is cross steps like this (crosses hands). So we have cross foot... The *limbo*, the limbo is also being done in significance with the crossing over of the soul from the state of purgatory into the higher heights. Now, Purgatory and Limbo means the same thing. So when you in a state of limbo is either you go up or you go down; according to how you live and who kind of person you is right – you good person you go up; you good (bad) person you go down.

That’s the belief what we have with purgatory, hell, heaven. Now, the significance of the dance was we taking the soul – this is how it was originally – and people trying to go through and then we raise the bar, and we come up and when we reach the top; there was the kind of victory for the soul; the soul was elevated and lifted. Now, today limbo is being done in a competitive form and who can go the lowest; the lower you could go, is the more champion you is... And it became competitive, and Julia Edwards is the one who sought of bring it from the backyard scene and the wake scene into the cabaret scene; ... costumes, props, make it look nice and make it look

\(^{45}\) ibid.
challenging; from top to bottom going down. So that is what limbo is today, you know; a competitive thing and who could go the lowest is the, seem like the victor. (Toney 2006, interview)

So the *limbo* like the bèlè, as observed by Herskovits and Cowley, has long been recast out of the context of the rituals for the deceased onto the stages of secular performances. But in so doing it continues to be used as a medium in which youths in Brooklyn are brought in contact with their cultural heritage. The medium of dance presents historical continuity between the communities of today and those of past generations, and through it then, diasporic linkages continue to be forged.
Fig. 3.17: Youths perform the Limbo dance at the Beacon Summer Camp 2006. 

(Photograph by Ken Archer 2006)
Fig. 3.18: Sesame Flyers Steelband (stage side) performing at their block party 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
It has been pointed out earlier that the concept of a Caribbean identity is a multifaceted one that embodies the common experience of the populations of the region, while at the same time embracing the diversity brought by the diasporic groupings that constituted these populations. Similarly, The Afro-Caribbean community in Brooklyn brings differing perspectives to the term “diaspora.” (1) The term can be used as in the case of Guyaspora, and Jaspora, to focus on the particular
and allow groups to maintain bonds within themselves, and consolidate transnational linkages with the nation states from which they migrated. (2) It can be used to cement broader bonds based on the region as a whole, and this becomes increasingly important in the case of migrants in a new land. It forges unity as a common people, of the Caribbean in the instance, who connect around common practices that blossomed in the Caribbean, and the performance of Carnival and the musical and religious practice facilitate this. (3) Even wider linkages are made with those of African descent in other regions of the world, based on the concept of Africa as the original homeland of all descendants of Africans, but also on evidence of retained and/or reinterpreted practices held to have originated with those who were brought or came from Africa to the New World. Many of these practices reside in the performance domains such as masking, music, and dance as found in the Carnival.
In this chapter I explore the use of rhythm in the process of the consolidation of diasporic linkages. Rhythm is usually defined as embracing “everything to do with both time and motion—with the organization of musical events in time.” Therefore, there are many events in a particular song, performance, or style that can be discussed under the designation “rhythm.” Here, I propose to examine one aspect of the rhythmic usage in the music of Carnival. In particular, I will look at repeated rhythmic patterns that are played in high-pitched tones, and I argue that the use of these patterns in recent soca music serves the process of consolidation of a Caribbean cultural diaspora. As well, these repeated patterns can be likened to those found in West African traditional music, and their prominence in the Carnival music of the Caribbean links this music to that of West African rhythmic practice and the African Diaspora in general.

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46 [www.oxfordmusiconline.com](http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com).
47 Repeated rhythmic patterns played on high-pitched percussion instruments such as bells have been called timelines (Nketia 1986). Locke (2002) has referred to this phenomenon as “bell patterns.”
Additionally, this chapter initially examines some of the discourse that surrounds the present soca music. This discourse is positioned within the context of hegemonic struggle that has been waged over what is permitted and accepted in the course of the development of the Carnival and its music. By referring to the viewpoints of some of the participants in the musical landscape of the Brooklyn Carnival, I demonstrate that this hegemonic struggle continues. I also focus on the rhythms that accompany the Jab Molassie mas’ portrayal, and show that these rhythmic patterns possess close resemblance to other rhythms used in other popular music of the Caribbean. And, I argue that infusion of these rhythms into the Carnival music produces sound events that facilitate the consolidation of community and diasporic relationships among the people of the Caribbean.
Rhythm in Soca

In the study and analysis of the genre of popular Carnival music, soca, many commentators have focused on the influence of East Indian derived music, North American soul, rap and hip-hop, and Jamaican 'reggae' and dub (Ahyoung 1981; Dudley 1996). In this chapter I investigate the prominence and significance of the Jab Molassie beat in the soca music of the last twenty-five years. In doing so, I aim to show that the rhythms used in the carnival music of recent decades represent linkages to the musical practice of the calypso music of the earlier era. And, by utilizing these rhythmic practices present-day Carnival musicians (the soca artistes) are aligning themselves, not only with aspects of traditional musical practice of Trinidad and Tobago, but with the musical practice of the Caribbean at large, especially the musical tradition of those in the Caribbean of African descent. Through their practice, these artistes are contributing to the consolidation of the notion of a Caribbean Diaspora. And, they are also aligning themselves within the musical practices of the African Diaspora as a whole.

Almost from its inception, Soca music has been the subject of scholarly research. Selwyn Ahyoung explored this then newly arisen style, and sought to discover how it varied from the traditional calypso art form out of which it grew. Relying on statements of soca innovator Ras Shorty I (Garfield Blackman), the views of his informants, and textual and musical analysis of numerous calypsos, he showed that in its origin, soca reflected the influence of Trinidad East Indian musical practices, as well as black American soul music of the 1970s, on the traditional
calypso (Ahyoung 1981). Dudley refers quite a lot to Ahyoung’s thesis, and notes that Ahyoung’s informants differentiated calypso from soca by the “beat,” the accompanying rhythmic patterns. Through the analysis of calypsos of both types he shows that there are differences in the use of the instruments of the “stable rhythmic group” as well as the voice in the two styles. Nonetheless, when he considered composite rhythm, difference was not clearly discernible. This he attributes to the possibility of him being an outsider to the culture and as such possessing a different interpretative framework. He also notes the “concerns about preservation of tradition, the iniquities of ‘commercialization’, and American or Jamaican influence in calypso” (Dudley 1996).

Differing Perspectives

These concerns about preservation noted by Dudley, point to the difference of opinions and attitudes toward ongoing changes in the Carnival music of Trinidad and the Caribbean. They also indicate the hegemonic struggle that has existed over this music. In their “Introduction to Of Revelation and Revolution,” Jean and John Comaroff rely on the ideas of Gramsci, and those assessments of his work by Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams of the British School of Cultural Studies, to present their views on the concepts of culture, hegemony and ideology, and their relationship. They define culture as:

... the shared repertoire of practices, symbols, and meanings from which hegemonic forms are cast – and, by extension, resisted...it is the historically
situated field of signifiers, at once material and symbolic, in which occur the dialectics of domination and resistance, the making and breaking of consensus. (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 386)

Hegemony is defined as the dominant conception, an orthodoxy that has established itself as “historically true” and concretely “universal,” which consists of constructs and conventions that have come to be shared and naturalized throughout a political community and as such it facilitates rule by consent as opposed to coercion. Ideology, on the other hand is described as an articulated system of meanings, values and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as the “worldview in any social grouping” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006). It is the expression and ultimately the possession of a particular group.

Hegemony exists in reciprocal interdependence with ideology. It is that part of the dominant ideology that has been naturalized, taken for granted and therefore no longer appears as ideology, and control and surveillance play an important role in the achievement of hegemony over time. Hegemony is never total, but residing in the unconscious, it is always threatened by the vitality that remains in the forms of life it thwarts, and is constantly being remade. Conversely, ideologies residing in the conscious of the subordinate groups may give expression to discordant but previously voiceless experience of contradictions that a prevailing hegemony can no longer conceal.
The Comaroffs also posit the concept of “contradictory consciousness,” which is the discontinuity between the world as hegemonically constituted and the world as practically apprehended and ideologically represented by the subordinate people. They point out that this notion has been used to account for the reactions of oppressed peoples to the experience of subordination and dehumanization. Further, they express the view that resistance may be realized in the form of explicit movements of dissent, as well as gestures that silently contest the forms of an existing hegemony (Comaroff and Comaroff 2006, 382-396).

These concepts are highly relevant to a study of Carnival and aspects of its music, such as this one. An unstable hegemony has existed within Carnival insofar as there has been a historical struggle to define what is permitted and what is not. This occurred initially between the colonial authorities and their subjects during the colonial period. The hegemonic struggle of this earlier period is evidenced by the numerous bans/prohibitions that were placed on the manner in which the lower classes participated in the festival. In the 19th century these included prohibitions on dancing, masking, beating of drums, fighting with sticks. In discussing the development of the calypso and calypsonians in the early 20th century, Liverpool notes that the calypsonian:

... had to deal, too, with the musical forms that were introduced as social and cultural processes of assimilation and syncretism unfolded and created changes in society...just as every effort was made during the period of
enslavement to keep the Africans out of the early Carnival festivals, so too, every effort, including the passing of laws, was instituted to silence the calypsonian in the first half of the twentieth century...Picong...along with humor and wit were the calypsonian's weapons as he strode from yard to yard and later from tent to tent, singing and introducing as he went various forms of calypso such as the oratorical or ballad type, the narrative (whereby events of the day were narrated in story form), the extemporaneous calypso... and the double and single tones. (Liverpool 1994, 183)

On the emergence of the steelband he notes further:

In 1881 Carnival riots occurred in Port of Spain, Trinidad, as the Freedmen showed their disgust for the crown colony system and its authorities who were then trying desperately to stop the annual celebrations. Accordingly, in 1884, following the Summary Offenses Ordinance, the use of the drum was banned...the drum was seen not only as a musical instrument but as a potent force in rallying the African community to action. The revelers therefore resorted to making music with bamboo stems, which were cut into pieces of varying lengths and then hammered on the ground, producing different tones. The music was called tamboo-bamboo...When the bamboo bands took the place of drums, the musical structure already in place continued. The ensemble consisted of three different-sized bamboo instruments – the bass,
foule, and the cutter. Bamboos were used especially by lower-class musicians. (Liverpool 1994, 189)

The hegemonic process is also evidenced by the discourse about the Carnival during this period, when criticisms were raised against musical practices as noise and masking behavior as rowdy and indecent. These discourses also privileged the fancy masks in opposition to some of the less glitzy portrayals of the lower classes. This contest for hegemony extended up to the 1950s, and the advent of the steelbands in the late 1930s was met with similar critiques of the music produced on these instruments. As well, during this period some calypsonians faced the indignity of being arrested for the inappropriateness of the lyrical content of their songs after legislation that facilitated censorship was passed. Liverpool notes:

The history of the calypso is filled with incidents of censorship... There were twelve calypso records by Ziegfield and Black Prince in 1939 that were prevented from entering Trinidad from the United States. In 1950 numerous letters from the press called for a ban on Tiger’s two songs *Leggo the Dog, Gemma* and *Daniel Must Go*. The first of these was described...as vile, cowardly and scurrilous...the manager of the Victory tent, Attila, was charged by the police for allowing Tiger to sing a calypso in contravention of the Theatre and Dance Halls Ordinance of 1934. (Liverpool 1994, 191)

It can be argued that this process of the colonial period, in which coercive measures such as prohibitions were placed on many carnival artistic forms, had its impact on,
and shaped to a significant degree, the aesthetic qualities that came to be accepted as the norm in the period following independence. Some of these qualities include: the refinement of the tuning of steelpans to meet the accepted western standards, the privileging of melodious and narrative songs as calypsos, and the dominance of the fancy, glitzy mask. Thus, many of the positions articulated by the colonial authorities in the 19th century attained hegemonic status, in that they became the unconscious norms to be observed in the production of Carnival.

The colonial era was followed by a period of relative stability with the advent of the period of independence, a period in which greater hegemony can be said to have existed, in that certain norms with regard to carnival music held sway. For instance, the “oratorical...ballad-type calypso...eloquent speeches in song and an eight-line strophic stanza” (Liverpool 1994,183) gained in prominence. However this has been still a contested hegemony. And it must be noted that the matter has not been allowed to rest there, as the last two decades have seen the revival of some of the same issues. The behavior of masqueraders is increasingly being condemned by leaders of the society, and the new forms of Carnival music are much maligned as noise and lacking in proper melodies and narrative structure.

For instance, Mr. Earl Patterson, mas’ producer and formerly a manager of a calypso tent in the 1970s and 80s, expressed the following views about soca music:

I do not appreciate much soca... you just go on a board and produce some horns ... and you get a rhythm and you put two words with it ... that aint
nothing. Calypso to me was telling a story, and why it is, years ago from the same calypso, we coulda get a proper road march. Could we get a proper Road March Now? ... You go back and hear Super Blue ... leh we go at Soca Baptists; Good music, good lyrics, good speed. Yuh could jump, yuh could dance to it; Unknown Band, same thing; (sings)

![Musical notation]

oh gor’, sweetness in something... They tellin' me Iwer George; all he could sing is Bum Bum, Bum Bum, Bum Bum... She bum bum large, she bum bum big. (Patterson 2006, interview)

He continues:

After Arthur de Coteau there are few honest arrangers, I might call Pelham Goddard, in Trinidad; Frankie Francis. Those were arrangers ... Ed Watson, those were fellas that produce a music for a calypso... When yuh go to the boy from San Fernando... I like Kenny, but Kenny has changed...if you carry this to Kenny, two line, Jump Jump Jump Jump Jump Jump Jump Jump Jump Jump, ah say to Jump Jump; Kenny go put music to that and tell... me ent know the price now, but if ah was in calypso... it hurt my heart... Arthur would run some ah dem with
Mr. Patterson clearly laments the direction in which the carnival music has gone, and dislikes the current music for its lack of narrative structure and “sweetness” of melody. But he does not despise all of the modern soca music. In speaking about Kernel Roberts, one of the driving forces of the current wave of carnival music, a musician, drummer and the son of the renowned calypsonian, the Lord Kitchener, Mr. Patterson observed:

He is good ...but he is using things in the modern way; he modernizing things, but he doing a good job. I was shock’, because one day I heard a tune by Destra, and I ask, who wrote that tune? ... Dey tell mih, Kitchener son. Ah say he so good, and a glad to see dat he follow he father footsteps. Ah know that he was musical, he coulda play the drums good, but ah glad to see that somebody could carry on he father work. Yuh doh always find dat. Blue Boy have he daughter dat could carry on he work. (Patterson 2006, interview)

For his part, Kernel has been quoted in the press as distancing himself from the “rara music,” that is the exceedingly percussive, noisy music. And he extols the virtues of proper melodic structure that his father is said to have stood for.48

Traditionally steelband music arrangers has used the music of the calypsonians for their panorama arrangements, and the music of Lord Kitchener has

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been foremost in this regard. About this, Patrick Phillips of Moods Pan Grove in Brooklyn comments:

Kitchener used to sing melodies mostly for the pan... now the jam and wine thing, wave your flag, hit your rag... to me... it's limited. 'Cause if I had to choose a song to play, I would choose a song with chords moving... that kinda thing from a musical point of view...even four chord is good. But ...when you have a two-chord song; most of them jam and wine is two chord ... that is electronic music... is no melody to it, the melody limited. So when you have that kinda song, what you could do with that... it limit your arrangement.

(Phillips 2006, interview)

Therefore, Phillips regards the current soca music as inadequate. It does not meet his musical taste and the needs of a musical arranger in producing arrangements for the steelband. He prefers songs that incorporate chord progressions and flowing melodies, and the current soca music does not provide these.

The captain of CASCYM steel orchestra expresses a broader view on the question of the appropriateness of soca music for steelband performance. He says:

Well, their music is appropriate because it is music; and music – pan could play anything. It all depends on the arranger, what he do with the music; because you could take Machel Montano fast jamming song and do a lot with it. So it all depends on the arranger; how he going to express himself, how he going to make that music come out...you could use any song and use it for
Panorama. People mightn’t think is appropriate, because we accustom saying pan music or whatever, but it all depend on the arranger; because I heard in the past Bradley did *Boney and Clyde*, and that was a fast high pace song, but it soun’ good when he did it. And like last year he did a song with Radoes, *Dahlin*, that not really a pan song, as pan people would say; but he experiment with it and it came out good, they came second in the Panorama. (Roberts 2006, interview)

He continues:

So it all depends on the arranger and what he could do with the music; if he can't arrange to that music. The culture is changing; soca has change from since 1950 something to now drastically, as we could see (laughs). Ah mean, it have to change, and you have to change with the time. If you decide not to change, you going to die. So if you are accustom arranging this one way and you decide I am going to stick like this – I’m not moving – and every body else moving ahead, you not going to go any where. So it all depends on the arranger, what he could express with that music. And then there is a lot of young arrangers... coming up who know these fast high pace songs and they experiment with it. (Roberts 2006, interview)

Further:

Like, one major thing, soca in the past had a lot of more chord structure; had a lot of more music to it. A lot of the calypso now, the calypsonian realize you
don’t really need all that music; as long as you have one catchy line you good to go. Some of them is like a 2 chord, some even one chord (laughs) and you going...they realize as long as they have a catchy song they good to go, they making their money. Why put all the effort into, you know, creating all this extra music. ... then the lyrics also; a lot of calypso, soca, had more lyrical content, now the lyrics have basically dropped a little to it. (laughs)... jump jump jump jump jump jump and wine jump jump, and that’s it for the song (laughs) . Back in the days they sing about politics, you know, and they will sing something vulgar but they will make it sound nice to the ears; and you’ll know the meaning, you know they have a double meaning; but you know exactly what he is talking about, but when he sing its nothing like that. But now they don’t do that, they just say jump and wine and wave and what ever, and that’s it. Ah mean there are still a few calypsonian out dey who still have that music into their song, but the new ones who coming up realizing - you know what, I could make my same money singing jump, jump - and they good to go... they not putting all that effort, you making you same exact amount of money; you getting your 5 6 7 shows a carnival season, and you have a hit song; why all that thing, you making the same money just raling up the crowd singing jump jump, or wine wine go down low (laughs). And the culture has change a lot. Some people say is for the worst, but I don’t think it’s for the worst, it just in anything - everything change and you just have to go with the change. (Roberts 2006, interview)
These statements by Travis Roberts reveal that there had arisen a prevailing, hegemonic view within the steelpan fraternity about what constitutes ideal calypso and soca music for the steel pan. But he also notes that, with the emergence of the recent strains of soca music, there is a competing aesthetic that is exercising its force on the music arrangers, who must adjust their styles of arranging to deal with the emerging changes and maintain their popularity. And, the acceptance of this aesthetic change is not only among the young since the music was accepted and arranged by the revered Clive Bradley before his death at the age of 69 in 2005.

These differing opinions represent a continuation of the ongoing hegemonic struggle over the aesthetic notions that should be embraced in the celebrations of Carnival. And, they show that different groups and individuals within the same diasporic community bring varied consciousness, a different “store of symbols” (Tagg 1999) in their response to the changes in Carnival music.

Soca and the Jab Molassie Beat

Jocelyne Guilbault (2005) observes that:

In songs like "Jab Molassie" by Superblue, "Jab Jab" by Machel Montano, and "Vampire" by Maximus Dan, new relationships with tradition were forged. Old musical techniques (like repetition, call and response, and rhythmic patterns typical of traditional carnival characters like Jab Molassie or Jab Jab) and old calypso songs were not abandoned but reconfigured. (Guilbault 2005, 57)
These rhythms were being reemployed in the more recent Carnival music. Similarly, Rohlehr (1998), in writing about rhythms that have influenced calypso, makes the following comments:

Today so-called ‘Soca’ singers exploit a wide variety of traditional musical rhythms: from Orisha/Shango rhythms employed by David Rudder and Andre Tanker, to the Shouter/Baptist performance style of Superblue and Calypso Rose, to the dhantal and dholak rhythms of Brother Marvin and Ras Shorty I, or the Jab Jab J’Ouvert beat that, recalled by Penguin in 1980 (The Devil), has taken up permanent residence in the current songs of Superblue (Jab Jab), Shadow (Pay the Devil 1993) and various other singers. What Eddie Grant calls ‘Ring Bang’ is Jab Jab music blended with old time Guyanese masquerade rhythms which bear some resemblance to the Jab Jab. (Rohlehr 2004, 5)

I am of the view that the Jab Jab (Jab Molassie) rhythms referred to by Guilbault and Rohlehr, have in fact become the dominant rhythms used by the current soca artistes in Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to those songs mentioned above, these rhythms can be heard in songs such as Bunji Garlin’s Ah From De Ghetto (2002), Destra Garcia’s Tremble It (2002), Machel Montano’s Scandalous (2006), Wayne Rodriguez and Xtatik’s Footsteps, and Sanell Dempster and Blue Ventures’ De River.
Fig. 4.1: Blue Devils\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{49} http://www.trinisoca.com/gallery/canboulay
What Is “Jab Molassie”

The term “jab molassie” is derived from the traditional Carnival character of the same name and literally means “molasses devil.” It has been customary for this mas’ to be portrayed in the J’ouvert celebrations that occur in the wee hours of the morning on Carnival Monday in Trinidad and Tobago. Errol Hill notes that the first account of Carnival bands of this nature was recorded by Charles Day in his accounts of the Carnival festivities of 1848. Day described:

a gang of almost naked primitives bedaubed with black varnish, pulling at a chain attached to one of the number who was occasionally knocked down and treated with a mock bastinadoing. (Hill 1972, 24)

Links have been forged between this portrayal and that of the “negue jardin,” which was a mask of the white planters that imitated the bonded slaves. Some viewed the portrayal by the formerly enslaved as an imitation of the planters’ imitation of them, and Hill gives the following description of the Jab Molassie, and points out that a different interpretation of the portrayal is possible.

On the other hand, a similar masquerade, called the ‘molasses negro’, was seen by Lafcadio Hearn in Martinique in 1888. This character wore nothing but a cloth about his loins; his whole body and face being smeared with a

\[\text{50 Jab, from diable – French for devil.}\]
mixture of soot and molasses. He is supposed to represent the original African ancestor. (Hill 1972)

Hill further explains:

In the West Indian carnival, blacking the face and the body with soot and molasses could have had different connotations. Molasses, a product of the sugar cane, whose cultivation might well have been hateful to the plantation slaves, could be yet another of the freedom symbols used in the masquerade. In Trinidad, the ‘jab molassi’ (French *diable*), or molasses devil, is still a prevalent and much despised character in the masquerade. (Hill 1972)

In the 1950s, Daniel Crowley observed:

... bands of red, green, or blue devils dressed like the imps of the Dragon Band with short kandal, tails and pitch forks, but with their bodies covered in ruku or green or blue powder. (Crowley 1956, 74)

These variants of Jab Molassie mas’ portrayal are still performed throughout Trinidad and Tobago at Carnival time. Particularly, prominent are the Blue Devils from the hills of Paramin, Maraval.51 And a character, known as “King Jab” or “Abyssinian Jab” with chain or rope attached was played in the 1930s (Walsh 2004,

51 The 2008 film, *JAB: The Blues Devils of Paramin*, directed and produced by Alex de Verteuil, provides ethnographic description and details of the masquerade and some of the individuals who portray this character.
146-147). Winston Bailey, the Mighty Shadow, sings of “Abyssinia coming down oh lard” in his description of devil mas’ in Tobago in times past.\textsuperscript{52}

This type of mas’ is also found in other parts of the Caribbean. As pointed out above, such a character was observed on the isle of Martinique in the late 19\textsuperscript{th} century. Also, a kind of Christmas mas’, the Papa Jab or Flavien Jab, dressed in rags, with hood over his head and a long tail was popular in the isle of St. Lucia. Followers wearing only torn short trousers with wire tail, covered with tar, grease, molasses, and spotted all over with red powder usually accompanied this mas’. They carried forks, and sang songs accompanied by handclapping (Crowley 1957, 11). Today the island of Grenada is particularly renowned for its Jab Molassie or Jab Jab mas’, and among the Grenadian community in Brooklyn there are groups who play this type of mas’ annually (See Fig. 4.4).

\textbf{Music of The Jab Molassie}

In Trinidad, the Jab Molassie character has also been associated with its traditional musical accompaniment. In the 1930s the percussive rhythms were played by tamboo bamboo ensembles, but over the last fifty years this has been done on pans, biscuit tins slung around the neck and beaten with sticks, usually with some other iron percussion, brake drums, cowbell, and whistles (Walsh 2004, 149). The use of tins, as percussive substitutes for the African drums, was necessitated by the ban that was placed on the playing of drums by the colonial authorities at the

\textsuperscript{52} Winston Bailey, \textit{Pay de Devil} 1993
time, a situation that gave rise to the tamboo bamboo and steelband percussion ensembles (Steumpfle 1995).

The basic rhythms played for the Jab Molassie mas’ are repeated patterns that are played on percussive instruments. They are shown in Fig. 4.3. The rhythm in 4.3a is the basic rhythm and this is varied in numerous ways, two of which are shown in 4.3b and 4.3c. The rhythmic pattern in 4.3c features an example of linear cross rhythm in which a measure of simple duple meter is followed by a measure in compound duple. The pattern in 4.3d is one of those used when two or more biscuit tins or drums are present. This rhythmic pattern in compound duple meter is played to accompany the basic pattern in 4.3a and its variants.

![Fig. 4.2 Jab Molassie Chant](image-url)
In addition to the rhythms of the drums, the portrayal is also accompanied by the chanting of a phrase in call and response: “Pay De Devil Jab Jab” (Fig. 4.2). The masqueraders often carry whistles that are used to sound out a portion of the
refrain, particularly “jab jab,” and the spectators may also participate in the performance of this chant.

The association of individual Carnival characters with specific music is by no means a strange occurrence in the context of the Trinidad and Tobago carnival. And, in his description of the many characters of a traditional devil band, Hill (1972) notes the words of his “chief informant,” Charles Bennett, who played in devil bands for over fifty years:

Devil Band is not like the ordinary bands, such like the historical bands. To every character that the band goes to take up there is a certain piece of music to play to bring that fellow out and if that piece is not played that man is not moving. (Hill 1972, 89)

While the ‘jab molassie’ bands may operate independently of these other devil bands, they observe the same tradition of providing specific musical accompaniment for the portrayal. It is in this context that the notion of a jab molassie or jab jab beat, which is today incorporated in quite a lot of the music of the soca artistes, arises.

Diasporic Linkages Through Rhythm

It is evident that the rhythmic patterns shown in Fig. 4.2 and 4.3 may be viewed as variations of the 3-2 clave pattern (Fig. 4.7k) found in quite a lot of Afro-Cuban music. They may also be seen as variations of some of the rhythms found in the French Caribbean musical styles cadence and zouk (Fig.4.). However, while it may be true that the jab molassie beat is rhythmically related to these styles, and in
fact cadence and zouk have both been used in variants of the soca genre, it would be
totally misleading to assume that Jab Molassie is a derivative of these forms, as
those unfamiliar with the tradition may tend to do. Its relationship to these forms
may stem from them being derived from the similar West African sources, but the
“rhythms of jab” have charted their own course of development in the context of
carnival celebration in Trinidad and Tobago and other Caribbean isles since the
emancipation of the enslaved in the nineteenth century. This path continues to be
carved out in the recent recontextualization and appropriation by the soca artistes,
in their songs/sounds that accompany the hundreds of revelers at the numerous
Carnival events.

It is in this context that the rhythmic usage in the recent soca music can serve
as an important link that facilitates the solidifying of the bonds of the Caribbean
people as a diaspora in their own right, as they migrate from the shores of the
Caribbean isles to metropolitan cities of North American and Europe. As I have
propounded above, Hill (1972) noted the portrayal of the Jab Molassie character was
observed in other isles of the Caribbean during the 19th century. This is still the case
today, and apart from Trinidad, the isle of Grenada is renowned for its Jab Molassie mas’
during its Carnival celebrations that are held annually towards the end of July. In
Brooklyn, New York, it is the Caribbean people who originated in Grenada that are
mainly responsible for the production of the biggest Jab Molassie bands in the annual
J’ouvert celebrations that precede the West Indian American Day Carnival Parade held on Labor Day on Eastern Parkway.\footnote{I learnt about this during my field research in Brooklyn in August 2006, when I made attempts to interview one of the persons who are actively involved in the production of Jab Molassie bands in both Brooklyn and Grenada. I did not succeed in my effort to get that interview. I tried again in 2007, but I was able to get some video footage in the J’ouvert celebrations for the 2007 Labor Day.}

Fig. 4.4: Two revelers portray the Jab Molassie mas’ at the 2007 J’ouvert celebrations in Brooklyn. (Photograph by Ken Archer 2007)
Travis Roberts, the captain of the CASCYM Steel Orchestra - the 2006 Panorama winners, avowed that there is also Jab Molassie mas’ portrayal on the isle of St. Vincent from which he migrated to the United States. He was also of the opinion that the rhythms of the Jab Molassie have been used for quite a while in the calypsos of the Caribbean isles, other than Trinidad, particularly Grenada. He sang the variant of the Jab Jab beat that is shown in Fig. 4.5.

![Jab Molassie beat as sung by Travis Roberts](image)

Fig. 4.5: Jab Molassie beat as sung by Travis Roberts

Travis pointed out that the mas’ characters found in St. Vincent Carnival, and the J’ouvert in particular, are essentially the same as those found in Trinidad. He says:

Believe it or not, it the same thing, they have the same thing like the mud band, or like...Jab Jab; Jab Molassie. Everything that happen in Trinidad is the same thing happen in St. Vincent. Everybody you know always think it’s different, but it’s the same thing... Moko Jumbie everything, you name it, they have it...the same names...Grenada is famous for that... If you listen to they 200
calypso, All they calypso have the jab jab beat in dey ... pap pap pap pap pap pap (see fig. 4.5). Just a rhythm like that will... one rhythm will keep the whole thing going...So basically, that basic Jab Jab beat, they would just improvise on it a lot...If you listen to their calypso; they have that beat in the background, some way disguised. (Roberts 2006, interview)

He continues:

A lot of the modern soca now, they experiment, if you listen they have some hip hop beat in them; latin beat in them; so they experimenting with the different culture and they putting it into their soca...some of them do but not all (have the jab jab beat)...But like am, for the last four years, you not really hearing that jab jab beat too much; ‘cause I guess they move away from that, they trying other stuff now...it still there, but it depends on, I would say like the Trinidad calypso, they don’t have it like the Grenadian or the Vincey, it kind of changing like the one chord or the 2 chord aspect. But if you hearing it, it probably modified a little... (Roberts 2006, interview)

Thus, Travis corroborates in part the presence of the jab jab beat in calypso and soca, but he also recognizes that there are other currents that are influencing soca musicians, particularly the rhythms of American Hip Hop and Jamaican Dancehall. He is of the view that with the impact of these styles on the soca, the jab jab beat has become less overtly discernable.
The rhythms of Jab Molassie are variants of the rhythmic practice that is described as part of the *tresillo-cinquillo* complex (Floyd Jr. 1999, 1-38). Floyd Jr. expresses the view that the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* rhythmic patterns (see Fig. 4.7) are fundamental rhythms that have served to meld the diverse musical product of African descendants in the circum-Caribbean together. He identifies the music of the broad Caribbean including the Spanish-speaking and French speaking countries, as well as the music of cadence in Dominica.

In this regard Floyd says that:

... a compelling continuity existed between and among the African-derived and –influenced musical genres of this large region – a continuity perpetuated by African cosmologies that in some cases eventually lost their functional value but left behind their aesthetic residue. (Floyd Jr. 1999, 30)

Noting that this continuity was maintained in part through dance, he adds:

The Rhythm of many such Caribbean dances were multifaceted, but most probably had in common two motives that have come to be known as *cinquillo* and *tresillo*... Both *cinquillo* and *tresillo*, which are ubiquitous in black music-making in the Americas, had their origins in an African time-line pattern of sub-Saharan Africa. Included among Gerhard Kubik’s pyramid stump time-lines, this pattern and its variations and derivatives constitute the shortest of the African timelines. (Floyd Jr. 1999, 6-7)
Mario Rey reiterates some of these views in discussing the rhythmic usage of Cuban composers of art music during the rise of the *Afrocubanismo* in the early decades of the 20th century (Rey 2006). He identifies rhythms, derived from the ritual and celebratory practices of Afro-Cubans, which came into prominence in Cuba and eventually impacted greatly on the general musical life. In particular, he refers to both the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* patterns, which may be seen as variants of each other. And he considers them as derivatives of the habanera and contradanza rhythms. Rey notes that in both of these “parent” rhythms the “strong portion of the beat” is articulated, but:

> It is not uncommon in black rhythms to represent the strong portion of the beats with silences... several variants are thus formed through this African tendency of emphasizing the weak portion of the beats... each of the parent rhythmic figures generates three related syncoles by silencing or eliding the notes coinciding with the strong portion of beats one or two or both. (Rey 2006, 192-3)

Further he states:

> Thus the *tresillo* and *cinquillo* are descendents of the habanera and *contradanza* figures, respectively, by eliding the strong portion of the second beat. (Rey 2007, 193)

And he recognizes the pervasiveness of these patterns in Afro-Cuban folk and popular music.
Morales also alludes to the ubiquity of the habanera rhythm, which he posits as having originated among the Afro-Cuban population, and disseminated throughout Latin America to influence many diverse musical forms (Morales 2003). In his theorization about the performance of rhythm on the African continent and the proposal of the concept of complementary rhythms in the realization of performances, Rahn (1996) links these rhythmic patterns to the rhythmic practice of sub-Saharan Africa. As well, rhythmic patterns such as the habanera and the conga-comparsa have been identified as timelines or bell patterns that are played to hold the music together during the performance of traditional dances such as the Gahu dance amongst the Anlo-Ewe.\(^5\)

Writing about zouk, popular music of the French Antilles, Benoit (1993) states:

> The creators of this new rhythm (zouk) claim that a hint of biguine can be heard on the high hat and the snare drum. In fact, biguine's evolution can be traced in the following types of music: Haitian compas direct and cadence-rampa through the rhythmic pattern played on the cymbals ... which is identical to the biguine’s rhythm; Dominica cadence-lypso through its rhythmic pattern played on the high hat; and zouk which seems to be a synthesis of these different rhythms. (Benoit 1993, 54)

And,

For the French-speaking island of Guadeloupe, biguine, which used to be the basic rhythm for popular music, has been progressively transformed to become the new rhythm called zouk – which according to 1988 artists, is a state of mind, a musical synthesis. (Benoit 1993, 67)

The basic rhythmic patterns of the biguine is the *cinquillo* pattern, which was articulated on the guitar in the 1940s, on the maracas, hi-hats and/or snare drum in the ‘60s (Benoit 1993). In the compas direct of Haiti it is featured on the cymbals, while a *tresillo* pattern or variant is played on the hi-hat in cadence-lypso. Relying on the work of Guilbault (1993) Floyd makes the following observation:

Grounded in the traditional music of Guadeloupe and Martinique, *zouk* has as its rhythmic foundation the drum rhythms of *gwo ka* and *bèlè*, with occasional use of *menndé* and *mas a Sen Jan* rhythms, which are part of the *cinquillo-tresillo* rhythmic matrix. (Floyd Jr. 1999, 23)

It is therefore clear that rhythms of the nature of those related to the *cinquillo-tresillo* patterns are common throughout the circum-Caribbean. The Rhythms of the Jab Molassie and soca can be included among them.

*Tresillo- Cinquillo* in Calypso/Soca

While Floyd asserts that the *tresillo-cinquillo* complex is not as readily discernable in calypso music in comparison with other musics of the Caribbean, he

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55 See also Guilbault 1993, 214-215.
notes that it is indebted to the *calenda*, which he postulates bears *tresillo-cinquillo* traits. He says:

> Generally speaking, the music of the West Indies is calypso-based rather than son-inspired, existing within a calenda complex ... The calenda seems to have been a significant generating force in the establishment and continuation of the kinship that exists among the circum-Caribbean music and dance forms.

(Floyd 1999, 23-24)

There is much evidence that supports the presence of *tresillo-cinquillo* rhythms in calypso. An examination of the earliest recordings of calypso reveals this. For example, the 1930s recording of *Ba Boo La La* by the Roaring Lion, and *In The Dew and The Rain* by the Growler (Fig.4.6), both possess clearly audible performance of variants of these patterns. In the former a 3-2-rumba clave pattern is played consistently, while in the latter the piano carries the conga pattern (Fig. 4.7c) identified by Rey, and the rhythm of the vocal part features clear variants of the *cinquillo* pattern\(^{56}\) (See Fig. 4.7).

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Fig. 4.6: *In de Dew an’ de Rain*, The Growler (1938)
a. The habanera rhythm

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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b. The cinquillo

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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c. The conga
d. Conga-comparsa

c. The conga
d. Conga-comparsa

e. Rhythm of conga drums in calypso

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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f. Variation of calypso conga drum

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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g. Composite rhythm pattern of Gahu

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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h. Cadence

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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i. Zouk

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
```
j. Zouk variation

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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k. 3-2 Clave pattern

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\frac{\text{a}}{\text{b}}
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Fig. 4.7: Related rhythmic patterns

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57 The habanera, cinquillo, conga and conga-comparsa rhythms shown here were taken from Rey 2006.
There is also evidence that in the context of live performances in particular, that these rhythmic patterns held sway. For instance, the rhythmic pattern identified as the habanera pattern (fig. 4.7a) has long been an integral part of the performance of calypso on the road at Carnival time in Trinidad during the procession of bands. Elder steelband men refer to this pattern as the *du dup*\(^{58}\) rhythm, since it was played on that instrument during the tamboo bamboo and early days of the steelband. And it is still played today on occasions such as J’ouvert celebrations as I witnessed during those celebrations in Brooklyn in 2007.

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\(^{58}\) Interview with Winston Munroe, Brooklyn, New York, August 2006, and, conversations held with my father, who was involved in those early steelband days. The *du dup* is an instrument made of a barrel drum. This originally was beaten on the two sides, but later it developed with two notes on one side with the same pattern being played.
Fig. 4.8: Modern version of *dudup*\(^{59}\) is seen to the extreme left of this rhythm section.

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)

\(^{59}\) The traditional *dudup* is a smaller drum. What is seen in this picture really represents a stage in the evolution of the *dudup* to the bass drums of the modern steel orchestras. This was at one time called a tuned boom. But rhythmically, it is played in a manner similar to the *dudup*. This point was made clear to me in conversation with my father.
When steelbands took up the use of drum kits, this rhythm, or the tresillo, or conga patterns were played on the kick drum by the drummer. This is still the practice today. Mr. William Munroe had the following to say in response to questions about the rhythms heard in a soca song that was being played on his computer.

I’m hearing like a dudup...Dup pi dup pi, Dup pi dup pi” (fig.4.7a and 4.7j)...That’s the rhythm of the dudup...This was the basic, basis for every musical rendition ... before the bands actually had...the conventional drum set. This was the basic rhythm that would give the band the timing for any song...It’s the basic music and when you doing any job there is a foundation; this is the foundation for any piece of music...with regard to calypso...You can actually carry a whole band with just that beat, because most of the bands in the 50s and 60s didn't have the trumpets and the saxophone and so forths, very few people had that. So you would have maybe two or three guys with dudups and a piece of iron; and... that was your music coming down the street...even when they did have the trumpets and saxophone, this beat would carry a band right through. This never stopped, if this stops the band stops ...so that’s the whole substance of the music. (Munroe 2006, interview)

About the influence of Dancehall and Hip Hop on the soca music, he says:

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60 During my field research in Brooklyn in August 2006, I questioned the drummer of Caribbean Youth Panoramics about the 3 + 3 + 2 rhythm that he played consistently on the kick drum. He explained to me that this was how the kick drum has been traditionally played in the performance of calypso by steelbands. The elder drummer in the band, Mr. Lawrence, who is one of the founders and leaders of the ensemble, taught him.
They’re influenced by some of the lyrics, but not the beat... the rhythm is from, I would say even the 40s ...They probably would take towards some of the dancehall because of the fact that this is what attracts the young folks, and if they want to sell records they want to be an attraction to get people to come out to their concerts. They would have some of the dancehall type rhythm into their songs, but the basis of their song, the guts of their song, really has the soca and calypso. (Munroe 2006, interview)

Hence while conceding that the soca artistes are influenced by the Dancehall and Hip Hop genres, and may be forced to gravitate towards the popular styles because of economics, Mr. Munroe is of the view that their music is rhythmically still firmly planted in long standing traditions of carnival music performance. Further, there are patterns that are played on the inner pans, and sometimes the iron/brake drum, that maybe characterized as belonging to the cinquillo complex (Fig. 4.7f). As such, the presence of such patterns in the more recent soca music represents a continuation of older traditional practices.

In calypsos of more recent vintage, variations of these rhythmic patterns persist. For instance, the tresillo pattern is featured in the popular 1980s calypso of Alphonsus Cassell of Montserrat, The Arrow, Hot Hot Hot (See Bilby and Manuel 2004, 227-228). This vocal hook line, which is repeated ad infinitum in the calypso, is sung to the tresillo rhythm. Further, an innovation of the arranger Leston Paul61

61 Leston Paul was the musical arranger of the original recording of Cassell’s Hot Hot Hot.
brought this pattern to the fore in the rhythmic accompaniment on the snare drum. And this *tresillo* pattern had been a prominent characteristic of Jamaican dub music of the last couple of decades.\(^{62}\) As well, many of the calypsos arranged by Paul in the ‘80s and ‘90s also gave prominence to a version the *tresillo* rhythm in which the initial dotted quarter note is silent or played by another instrument, while the following dotted quarter note and quarter note are sounded on the high pitched snare drum. In fact, this variant is embedded in the characteristic pattern played on the pair of conga drums that have been traditionally used in calypso ensembles and steelbands (Goddard 2007, interview). Pelham Goddard\(^ {63}\) also points this out:

> When Leston Paul came in to play ... All of a sudden yuh start to hear the snare drum goin’ – pap pap, pap pap, pap pap... (Fig. 4.11) (while tapping’ on his legs); but with Super Blue an’ thing I do all kin’ ah double beat – dudu pap etc. Now pap pap is one ah the beat that yuh play in congas (demonstrates on his legs) – yuh see mih han’ goin’ so – tha’ is a right han’ beat on the congas, right in Calypso. (Goddard 2007, interview)

In the performance of these patterns one of the hands actually plays only the two-stroke variant, and if this is played on the snare of the drum kit, it stands out as a

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\(^{62}\) Interview with Eddie Qualless, Brooklyn, New York, 2007.

\(^{63}\) Pelham Goddard is a renowned carnival musician. He was born into a musical family, being the nephew of the leader of the steelband movement in the 1950s and ‘60s, George Goddard. Pelham was the leader and musical arranger of the now-defunct soca band Charlie’s Roots. He was the original arranger for the Third World Steel Orchestra in the ‘70s and ‘80s, and he is today the musical arranger for the Exodus Steel Orchestra. Pelham has had the distinction of playing keyboards on numerous calypso and soca recordings; some of the artistes whose albums he has played on include, Kitchener, Sparrow, Calypso Rose, Shadow, Maestro, Shorty, David Rudder, Machel Montano, Tambu Herbert, and Sherwyn Winchester. In fact, he played on many of Shorty’s recordings that have been credited with introducing the soca genre.
distinct and separate rhythm, which can conjure up the Jab Molassie beat. Even in the context of the sampled and synthesized drums tones that are used in Carnival soca music of more recent vintage, this Jab Molassie beat can be represented.

Pelham observes further that:

> We used to produce according to how the music or the lyrical title ah the song, ... it eh like that now, a producer goin’ an’ get a sample of a ole tin pan or what ever. We used to have to do the authentic sound as how it is. ... Even now most ah the music yuh hear ... come from that Jom Balassie – puc puc tuc tuc tuc (Fig. 4.5)... they might break it up into different tones, ... different drum tones; when yuh collaborate everything, that’s the main beat yuh getting. (Goddard 2007, interview)

The 2006 song by female soca artist Destra Garcia, Fig.4.8, provides a good example of these observations. And it shows how the soca is rhythmically linked to the jab jab beat and the tresillo-cinquillo complex that Floyd speaks about. Cinquillo patterns are prominent in the melodic line of the lead singer, measures 2 and 6, and the three-note tresillo rhythm is heard in the response of the chorus in measures 4 and 8. The bass also carries this tresillo pattern, while the snare drum and the keyboard joins them on the last two strokes of this pattern. The kick drum plays on the strong beats and with the snare creates a composite rhythm that is the habanera.
Kernel Roberts, the son of the famed calypsonian Lord Kitchener and a respected musician in his own right, refers to the *tresillo* pattern as a “straight snare” beat. And he considers the rhythmic patterns shown in figures 4.7a and 4.7g to be variations of this “straight snare” pattern. He is also of the opinion that this “straight snare” beat is the basic beat of Jab Molassie.  

As a drummer, composer of soca music, and musical director of the band Machel Montano and Xtatik, he accepts that soca musicians have been influenced and are influenced by other styles, such as dancehall and hip-hop. These direct influences are undertaken in order to innovate and develop new sounds in the production of the music. However he is adamant that in the course of incorporating new elements into a style, the balance is strongly in favor of the style of music into which these elements are being added. Thus, in using dancehall, hip-hop, or any other elements in the soca, the mix is weighted heavily in the favor of soca musical elements. And the “straight snare” pattern is fundamental to soca.

Some other examples of soca music that feature these related patterns include Machel Montano’s *Scandalous* (2006) in which the Jab Molassie beat is most prominent, and *One Island* (2006) by Nadia Batson that used the zouk rhythmic patterns shown in Fig. 4.8j, which are the same as the habanera, and the *dudup* pattern. This latter rhythm is also heard in Bunji Garlin’s (Ian Alvarez) *One Family Telephone conversation with Kernel Roberts, September 23rd, 2008.*

64 Telephone conversation with Kernel Roberts, September 23rd, 2008.

65 Ibid.
(2004), as well as in the song *Freedom* (2004) that is sung by his wife, Fay Ann Lyons. It is also prominent in the Benjai’s *Over and Over* (2002).

Guilbault (2005) has noted that this song by Benjai employs the practice of “riding the riddim,” which was developed by the Jamaican dub and dancehall artistes. He uses the “bess riddim,” and Seldon “Shell Shock” is credited with its creation (Guilbault 2005). This concept of “riddim” refers to the full instrumental track to which the artiste performs. It includes the pitch instruments such as the keyboard, the back vocal tracts, and the percussion instruments and tones. In the case of this “bess riddim,” the habanera or zouk rhythmic pattern is carried by the high-pitched percussive tones of the snare drum. Thus this particular example is doubly linked to Caribbean musical practices. Additionally, it has been acknowledged that soca, in its initial formation, was influenced by cadence-lypso of Dominica (Guilbault 1993, 49-50).

In speaking about the production of one of the hits of soca, *Sugar Bum Bum*, which was recorded in 1977, Pelham Goddard points out:

Well Ed Watson was the soca man yuh know. Now Kitchener end up, somehow he end up by Ed Watson ... So Ed Watson in the studio to record his album for 1978...Ed Watson is a fella, he used to do research; he used to take a set ah African rhythms, Haitian rhythms, Spanish rhythms, and he used to sit in his office at home and listen; he have a thing on, listen, listen – if he hear something – he take a bass line from here, some chords. So he come up with
some music, he didn’t know what he going to call this music...Kitchener gone to compose lyrics; He come up with *Sugar Bum Bum*. (Goddard 2007, interview)

Ed Watson is a bandleader and musical arranger, who has been affectionately referred to as “Dr. Soca.” In the 1970s, during the period in which the genre soca emerged, he was the musical arranger for Garfield Blackman, Shorty (Goddard 2007, interview), who is accepted as being responsible for the creation of soca. In his testimony above, Pelham notes some of Watson’s contribution to the music, and the fact he referenced musical rhythms of Africa and the French and Spanish speaking Caribbean in the production of his soca music. The rhythmic patterns used in this musical style, including the more recent output in which the “Jab Jab beat has come to reside,” links the music to the rest of the music of the Caribbean that possesses a “family resemblance” (Guilbault 1993, 49). These rhythms serve as the unifying force among the various musical genres of the Caribbean, and soca music is quickly becoming the music of the West Indies, having incorporated all these patterns that are very closely related to each other. In so doing it is contributing to the further consolidation of a Caribbean cultural diaspora.
Fig. 4.9: *I Dare You*, Destra Garcia and Mark Loquain (2006); a rhythmic grid of the first eight measures of the verse.
The Significance of Jab Molassie

The jab jab beat has its origins in the portrayal of jab molassie (devil) mas. This masquerade portrayal has been linked with the “canboulay” and “jamette carnival” celebrations of the lower classes, the former slaves and the colonial oppressed (Rohlehr 1990) of the nineteenth century. It is held that in this portrayal the formerly enslaved caricatured the slave masters, the devils of the sugar cane plantations, the molasses devils (Hill 1972). The text of Penguin’s 1980 calypso, The Devil, is instructive in this regard:

So you ‘fraid Satan, Dat mysterious man
And you keep saying, in hell you living

Chorus

You ‘fraid the devil, you ‘fraid ‘im bad

Well look de devil, right in yuh yard

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66 Masquerade procession that developed in 19th century Trinidad. It originated among the enslaved and came to prominence following the Emancipation from slavery on August 1st, 1838. It was the subject of suppression by the colonial authorities at the time. This culminated in the “Canboulay Riots” of 1881. The term “canbouley” is thought to be derived from the French cannes brulés, which means “burning canes”. And, the canbouley masquerade procession is believed to have originated from the processions in which slaves engaged as they moved to put out fires on the sugarcane plantations. It should be noted that in a 2007 lecture at delivered at the National Library in Port of Spain, Trinidad, professor of African-Caribbean languages Maureen Warner-Lewis argued that the word “canbouley” or “camboule” is not of French origin, by derives from the Congolese word “cambula”, which means parade or procession often accompanied by call-and-respose singing and percussive instruments.

67 Type of masquerade that was prominent in the last three decades of the 19th century, in which the characters focused on portrayals that were viewed as vulgar and amoral.

68 Calypso sobriquet of Sedley Joseph – The Penguin.
And he grinnin’ while you sayin’ grace

Shakin’ up he tail in people face

Look de devil dey, look de devil dey

Devil in business, in de hall of justice

In pot guts old men, who seduce lil’ children

Anoder kin’ share licks and blows

Hidin’ behin’ some police clothes

It have some devil, with gown and bible

This calypso to which Rohlehr (1998) refers as embodying jab jab rhythms, might well be the first among calypsos of the soca era in which these rhythms are unambiguously used. I reference it here because it presents these jab molassie rhythms in context similar to that of the original mas’ portrayal. Here the different institutions of power, business, the judiciary, the police, the church, representative of the class structure, are portrayed as being the sites in which the devil dwells. Sites

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responsible for the hellish existence of the people, just as the former masters were responsible for the condition of the enslaved on the sugar plantations. The question thus arises: Is there a class basis for the jab jab beat taking up “permanent residence” in the songs of the current artistes, even in songs that are ostensibly apolitical?

Jab Molassie Dance

In Penguin’s calypso quoted above, the phrase “shaking up he tail in people face” is a linguistic sign that Penguin uses to indicate the audacity with which the “devil incarnates” flaunt their power on the mass of people. It also refers to the characteristic dance of the mas’ character. This dance involves suggestive gyrations of the waist that many may consider as possessing sexual connotations, and hence vulgar. Walsh (2004) notes that the dance style involves:

... a spread-kneed, angular strut with pelvic grinding, arms extended outward …

Devil winin’ can create the impression of undifferentiated, insatiable sexual mania, humping anything at anytime. (Walsh 2004,149)

Efforts were made by the colonial authorities in the nineteenth century to suppress, what they perceived as, the vulgarity involved in the Canboulay and jammette Carnival (Rohlehr 1990; Cowley 1996). It should be noted that following Carnival celebrations 2005, the Roman Catholic Archbishop (a Caucasian American)
met with the Prime Minister to discuss the institution of measures to curtail the increasing vulgarity in the Carnival celebrations in Trinidad and Tobago.

These events are indicative of the possibility that different segments of the Trinidad population reference different socio-cultural norms, and possess a different store of symbols with which to interpret some of the carnival phenomena. They also point to the hegemonic process in which the empowered segments of the society seek to impose their will and notions on those segments that are less empowered, who in turn often resist such efforts of imposition. And this process has contributed to the divergence between those who find the new strains of carnival music offensive and those who favorably assess the changes.

Structural approaches to cultural analysis posit that there are hidden generative mechanisms that are responsible for the perplexing and unique events of social life. The mechanisms are organized and patterned by structures that combine to explain the meaning of surface phenomena and diversity (Smith 2001, 97). Tagg (1999) applies the tenants of linguistic semiotics, formulated by Ferdinand de Saussure and developed for cultural theory by Claude Levi-Strauss, to propose a semiotic communication model for the analysis of musical “signs.” He also presents a classification scheme for the “musical sign.”

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Intended message - Transmitter - Channel - Receiver - Adequate Reaction/Response

Each step in this chain of communication is subject to the influence of the “socio-cultural norms,” possessed by the transmitter and receiver. And, the competence with which messages are transmitted and received is dependant on the “store of symbols” available to the transmitter and the receiver, separately and shared. This model may be of some relevance in developing a deeper understanding of the musical sign, the jab molassie beat, and its significance in the soca music of recent times.

Questions are therefore brought to the fore about the current prominence of the jab molassie beat in the soca music of Carnival. Given its association with the dance of the traditional mas’ character, is it a musical sign that is interpreted as a license to “misbehave” (a theme of many recent carnival songs) and be “vulgar,” therefore fueling the perceptions of rising vulgarity in the carnival celebrations? Is it a sign that points to the rejection of previously established aesthetics in favor of qualities that have been cast aside in the past?

Tagg presents for consideration, sign typology that may be used for the classification, interpretation and explanation of the musical sign. He seeks to isolate the phenomenon of sound from the area of linguistics and the linguistics signs. As such he presents the category, “anaphone,” of which he recognizes three types: namely, the “sonic anaphone,” the “tactile anaphone” and the “kinetic anaphone.” An
anaphone is a neologism analogous to “analogy.” However, instead of being an imitation of existing models in the formation of words, it means the use of existing models in the formation of (musical) sounds (Tagg 1999).

**Sonic anaphones**

A sonic anaphone can be thought of as the quasi-programmatic, ‘onomatopoeic’ stylization of ‘non-musical’ sound, e.g. Schubert’s babbling brooks, Baroque opera thunder, William Byrd’s bells, Jimi Hendrix’s B52 bomber ... unless you were alive in 1968, opposed to the US war in Vietnam, had heard a bit about Hendrix and Woodstock, were reasonably versed in the pop and rock scene of the time and recognised the US national anthem, you probably wouldn’t be able to grasp the full connotations of Hendrix’s ... version of *The Star Spangled Banner* ... In order for a sonic anaphone to work properly ... listeners must be conversant with the norms of musical stylisation whereby sounds ... are incorporated anaphonically into the musical discourse ... anaphones are not only sonic; they can also act as structural homologies of touch and movement. These sign types are simply called tactile and kinetic anaphones respectively. (Tagg 1999, 24)

This concept of a “sonic anaphone”, a sound event/sign that may be recognized as representative of other events (social and otherwise), is extremely interesting and useful for the consideration of the jab molassie beat as semiotic symbol. For instance, it is extremely likely that when this beat/rhythm is placed out of context,
away for the direct mas’ portrayal, in the current soca music, it may conjure up the images of the Jab Molassie mas’ portrayal in the minds of the listeners who are acquainted with the traditional character, or it may call to mind the context of J’ouvert celebrations in which this mas’ character is normally portrayed. Further, it may also be taken as a reference to the ideas and beliefs associated with the Jab Molassie. It may be seen as referring to “the original African ancestor” (Hill 1972), notions of satire, protests and affront to authority, and freedom from oppression (slavery etc.) that have come to be linked with the character.

These allusions can be heightened if the rhythms of Jab Molassie are joined to the timbre with which they have been traditionally heard, that is the sound quality of the biscuit tins and whistles on which musical accompaniment is provided for this traditional carnival character. Some musical arrangers of the soca genre, who have incorporated these rhythms in their arrangements, have deliberately sought to mirror the tonal quality of the biscuit tins. Musician Pelham Goddard pointed out that in the production of Penguin’s calypso, referred to above, deliberate efforts were made to represent the jab molassie beat, as it would be heard in the mas’ portrayal. Speaking about the recording of Penguin’s 1980 calypso and Superblue’s Soca Baptists of the same year, Pelham says:

Ellis Chow Lin On and mihself thinkin’: wey we gettin’ a bell from; wey we gettin’ a bell; we go put down the track, tomorrow we go go by Nagib.

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71 Hardware store owned by Syrian Trinidadian family in Port of Spain.
geh a bell; ’cause yuh need a bell to – ta dang ta – to make the tune, enhance the song. Dem time we producin’ live thing, it eh like sample nothin’ … now is a sample thing; so yuh have to find things; and for Penguin tune too; we ha’ to get a whole thing up; we ha’ to get oil pan and … we went by a shop an’ get ‘bout two – tang tang tang tang ta ka tang kang tang tang. We puh all ah that in Penguin tune. So, we went an’ geh the bell the next day; we record the tune the song, the music, we do a guide voice and the backgroun’ vocal; and in the backgroun’ vocal – hup du huh huh, huh (imitation of Doption) – that is the Baptist thing; so the record ha’ the real feelin’ ah the Baptists; the Baptist people couldn’t take that at all … So Super Blue won the Road March, Penguin came second. (Goddard 2007, interview)

Hence the musicians brought the biscuit tins and bells into the recording studio in order to achieve authentic sounds on the recordings. These sounds have since been sampled and used in many of the more recent soca music productions.\(^72\)

Tagg’s concept of “kinetic anaphones” is also useful in this regard. He explains this anaphone variant as follows:

Kinetic anaphones have to do with the relationship of the human body to time and space. Such movement can be literally visualised as that of a human or humans riding, driving, flying, walking, running, strolling, etc. through,

\(^72\) Interview with Pelham Goddard, August, 2007.
round, across, over, to and fro, up and down, in relation to a particular environment or from one environment to another. Gallops, marches, promenades, walking basses, struts, cakewalks, etc., not to mention the rocking, reeling and rolling of rock and roll music, all contain culturally stylised kinetic anaphones for certain types of human bodily movements. (Tagg 1999, 25)

As noted before, apart from being associated with particular music, the Jab Molassie is portrayed with particular stylized movements and dance. As such the jab molassie beat, in its current incarnation in the music of soca artistes, can be perceived also as a “culturally stylized kinetic anaphone” which calls to the foreground specific movements and bodily behavior, long used by the most despicable and abhorred creature in the Trinidad Carnival, the Jab Molassie. Hence the apparent rise in “indecency” and “vulgarity” that continues to cause the Roman Catholic Archbishop and others much trepidation.

Another category of musical sign that is suggested by Tagg, is the “synecdoche,” the use of the “part” to represent the “whole.”

**Genre synecdoche**

**Part for whole**

The second main category of musical signs is the *genre synecdoche*. In verbal language, a synecdoche denotes a figure of speech in which a part substitutes
the whole, as in the expression ‘all hands on deck’. Although, at least from the
captain’s view, the sailors’ brawn is worth more than their brain, the sailors’
hands on deck would not be used without their heads, arms, legs and the rest
of their anatomy. Similarly, ‘fifty head of cattle’ means fifty complete bovine
creatures, not just their fifty heads. A musical synecdoche is by analogy any
set of musical structures inside a given musical style that refer to another
(different, ‘foreign’, ‘alien’) musical style by citing one or two elements
supposed to be typical of that ‘other’ style when heard in the context of the
style into which those ‘foreign’ elements are imported. (Tagg 1999, 26-27)

This is of great relevance if one is to make a thorough assessment of the infusion of
the jab molassie beat in calypso music and its use in the later day soca. As pointed
out above, musical arrangers have on occasion not utilized the entire two bar
pattern and variants that represent the ‘rhythms of jab’, and have at times simply
referenced the jab molassie beat by “parts of the whole”. For instance, the first of
the two bars may be represented by a measure consisting of two dotted crotchets
(dotted quarter notes) followed by a crotchet (quarter note), which is the tresillo
pattern. This is vocalized as the onomatopoeic expression “Pac Pac Pac” (imitating
As well, it may be articulated with the first dotted crotchet as a rest and the resultant pattern in Fig. 4.11, which is used as the representative “part” or “synecdoche.”

Fig. 4.11

Tagg reiterates the importance of cultural awareness on the part of the listeners in order to interpret possible messages proposed by the musical signs. This is also of great importance in the perception and response to the jab molassie beat. When those with the knowledge, the “socio-cultural norms,” perform their response to the anaphone or synecdoche in the presence of others, they are often imitated by those unaware. This provides for a measure of continuity of the traditional response, although the response may become increasingly decontextualized, especially if it is performed away from the traditional performance setting and the attendant information regarding the performance is not passed on. In this way
recontextualized continuity of practices among diasporic groups can be fostered and continued.

Since the Jab Molassie character is not singular to Trinidad, but is found in other island nations of the Caribbean, the different variations of the jab molassie beat is responded to by persons of different national origin in the Caribbean. And in the context of the Caribbean community in Brooklyn it can function as a symbol of cultural unity. Further, the use of these tresillo-cinquillo rhythms by soca artistes gives the music a broad appeal throughout the Caribbean and within in the Caribbean communities abroad.

Because of the relatedness of the rhythms, diverse groups of persons are able to communicate with and respond to these rhythms, although the responses may vary. Groups and individuals may possess differing sets of socio-cultural norms in relation to this musical stimulus, and they may be cued to respond based on these. For instance, those familiar with zouk or cadence may respond based on the cultural knowledge they bear in relation to these genres of music, while those more familiar with Jab Molassie respond in a different manner. In this way the presence of these rhythmic patterns as an “anaphone” or as “synecdoche” facilitates a measure of communication between these groups. By functioning as a communicative tool these patterns assist in cementing bonds between these communities, thereby further consolidating a shared diasporic relationship.
Additionally, the growth in the use of the jab jab beat shows the shift in the hegemonic struggle that has been waged since the nineteenth century by the then authorities against “vulgarity” etc. While the origin of these rhythms and the mas’ portrayal that they accompany is posited among the ranks of the lower classes, it cannot be said that this is so today. The revelers who party to the strains of the musical products of the various soca artistes do not come from a monolithic economic class. They span the class divide. Although the composition of bands, in terms of revelers, may reveal a class distinction among the bands, the masqueraders across bands all party to the same music. Also, there is little evidence to suggest that the artistes are adherents of a class-based outlook in the use of these rhythms. Instead of reflecting a class basis, the use of the jab molassie beat and related rhythms in soca music reflects a blurring of the class distinctions in relation to this musical practice and the behavioral norms associated with it.
CHAPTER 5

COMMUNITY AND PARADES

Voluntary Associations: The Case of the Sesame Flyers

This chapter addresses the role of voluntary or nonprofit organizations in the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival Parade and the West Indian community in general. As I have already shown in dealing with the issues of migration and diaspora as they relate to the West Indian community, voluntary nonprofit organizations have constituted an integral role in the affairs of the community, and in the carnival celebrations, from the earliest period of migration of West Indian immigrants into the New York metropolis. I aim to show some of the concrete ways in which voluntary associations contribute to the process of consolidation of a sense of community, how they assist in the strengthening of a sense of commonality as a Caribbean diasporic community. In the second part of this chapter I will examine the three different parades, the Eastern Parkway Parade, the J’ouvert, and the Children’s Parade, that are held during the Brooklyn Labor day festivities, and show how these processional events also aid this process of continued Caribbean diasporic awareness.
Voluntary associations, whether formal or informal, have played, and continue to play, an important role in the life of modern society, especially in the urban environment. Such associations have flourished without precedent in the dynamic cities of the western world (Gist 1967, 384). The tremendous growth in the presence of voluntary, common-interests associations in society has been increasingly evident since the onset of the Industrial Revolution in Europe to the present time. And, this is especially marked in the rise of the modern cities. For while there were common-interests groups in the pre-industrial era, and among pre-industrial populations even in the era of industry, their prominence and impact were clearly not comparable as in the industrial era and in the industrial cities of the modern world (Anderson 1971). In the conditions of the complexities and demands of modern life, traditional institutions such as the family and other kinship-based associations cannot, by themselves, sufficiently provide for the requirements of the members of society. Societal needs have become increasingly differentiated, and to meet these diverse requirements voluntary, common-interests associations have come into existence to satisfy cultural, artistic, and aesthetic desires that are not provided by the traditional institutions (Gist 1967; Anderson 1971).

As societies become more urbanized...traditional forms of organization are often unable to carry out expected functions or to perform other functions necessitated by changing conditions of community life. Presumably urbanization tends to weaken the influence which such institutionalized groups as the family, caste, tribe, or church exercise over their members.
Furthermore, the complexities and demands of modern urban life are such that the traditional institutions cannot, by themselves, adequately satisfy all human needs. To meet these needs, however defined by the persons involved, voluntary associations have come into existence. (Gist 1967, 385)

Functions of Associations

Far from engaging in the pursuit of one apparent function, many voluntary associations are multi-functional, and the more complex an association becomes the greater is its tendency to diversify its functions. These associations may serve as sites of status and power, as mechanisms for socialization, and the indoctrination with prevailing values and ideologies. They may assist in the canvassing of public opinion, and facilitate collective action towards specified goals. Such goals may include the provision of economic security for individuals, and the availability of educational opportunities. They may also facilitate connections to the outer world and adjustment to the social milieu of new environments, in the case of immigrants (Gist 1967). As will be seen, the activities of the Sesame Flyers organization in Brooklyn engage many of these diverse functions.

In the cities, it has been shown that modern associations may play a special role for migrants. They can aid migrant rural villagers in the re-creation of the traditional society they were accustomed to in a distant, urban milieu (Little 1968; Anderson 1971; Avorgbedor 1986). Migrants may, in this way, transplant
traditional institutions to foreign soil, as had been the case with peasant Ukrainians who had migrated to France and re-instituted village customs as the activities of multipurpose associations in the host country (Anderson and Anderson 1962, 167-168). Another example is the Spaniards in Mexico City, who organized themselves into formal voluntary organizations that helped maintain their “ethnic identity” (Kenny 1962, 174). The transplanting of the Caribbean Carnival into the large cities such as Toronto, New York, London, and Miami, provides another good example of this role of the voluntary common-interests association as a vehicle through which migrant communities maintain some measure of continuity with their places of origin.

Urban associations carry out social integrative functions and may bring disparate groups together (Banton 1968, 361; Sills 1968, 373; Anderson 1971). These groups provide training for individuals who are not yet accustomed to the vagaries of modern city life, and they train individuals in skills they can apply more widely in city life (Little 1965, 103-117 in Anderson 1971, 218). In this way, “the associations make the innovations seem less strange. They build for the migrant a cultural bridge and in so doing they convey him from one kind of social universe to another” (Little 1965, 87 in Anderson 1971, 218).
Friendly Societies in the Caribbean

Voluntary associations under the rubric of “friendly society” have played a significant role in the lives of the people who have populated the isles of the Caribbean. This dates back to the early nineteenth century, particularly in the aftermath of the emancipation from slavery, which in the British Caribbean occurred in 1838. In Trinidad for instance, there arose a number of “nation” friendly societies that represented descendents of different African ethnic groups in Trinidad at the time. The Yoruba Friendly Society was founded in 1838, and there is evidence that there existed a Congo Society amongst others (Cowley 1996). The following passage is taken from a report published in the Port of Spain Gazette on the failure of a prosecution brought against the “Congo Society” in 1853:

It appeared from the evidence, that the defendant, Allen, is a trustee of certain persons, Africans of the Congo nation, who have associated themselves together as ‘the Congo Society’, and who have purchased certain premises in Charlotte Street, known as the Congo Yard, where three or four nights every week they hold public dances, to the music of the banjee drum and shack-shack until the hour of 10 p.m. – and often much later – that when any of the society die, whether in the town or environs, the dead body is brought to this yard to be ‘waked’ as it is termed; on which occasion the whole neighborhood are (sic) obliged to pass a sleepless night. (Port of Spain Gazette, 12 November 1853; in Cowley 1996, 49)
This report clearly points to the existence of an association that was known as the Congo Society. It also indicates that it included among its functions the participation in burial rites of its members, and the hosting of public dances. These associations met for secular and religious activities, and various societies representing African nations participated in the Carnival of nineteenth century Trinidad. They were instrumental in the institution of the "band" system in which separate masquerade bands displayed costumes, and they participated in the stick fighting bands led by their chantwell (Cowley 1996). These friendly societies persisted well into the 1900s and a few organizations can still be found in some of the rural villages of Trinidad.

In addition to these nation societies, there existed associations such the Society of St. Rose and the Marguerite Society, which in addition to Trinidad were found in the islands of Martinique and St. Lucia. These associations owed allegiance to particular saints, and they sponsored dances with decorations and other accoutrements. Participants dressed in elaborate costumes and were accompanied by drumming and call and response singing (Rohlehr 1990; Guilbault 1987; Cowley 1996). The last decade of the nineteenth century also witnessed the growth of those

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73 Lead singer of these bands who led the chants that accompanied the dueling stick fighters. A chorus of singers or the participating crowds responded to the chants in call-and-response fashion.

74 Personal observation. Many of the elder people in villages belonged to these societies to which dues would be paid. Upon death the family of the deceased would receive a small remittance to assist in the burial. My father’s grandmother and mother, my mother’s mother, my wife’s mother and uncle, belonged to such friendly societies. Like the Congo Society mentioned above, they owned or rented buildings that functioned as their meeting halls in which dances were regularly held. These halls were called lodges or friendly society halls. In 1998, I attended a friend’s wedding that was hosted in the Gasparillo Friendly Society Hall in south Trinidad. At the time the hall was an old building, the general condition of those halls that persist.
associations that became known as the “Social Unions,” which became featured in the more mutually accepted Carnivals of the early 1900s. They began to appear in the celebrations in late 1890s, and the White Rose Social Union was founded in 1895. Although they may not have been friendly societies, these organizations and similar fancy bands seem to have adopted the regalia and elected hierarchy of the friendly society organizations. The practice of voting for Kings, Queens and others in a retinue of European nomenclature can be traced to the dance societies of the slavery and early emancipation periods; as well as the lead singers (chantwells) at the head of these Social Unions, who were responded to by the choruses of the members as they paraded competitively in Carnival (Cowley 1996).

This evidence mirrors that revealed in the scholarly work on the *cabildos* among the Afro-Cuban population that were also involved in Carnival and other processional festivities during 19th century Cuba and onwards (Bettelheim 1988 and 1991).

The history of Carnival in Havana is intimately connected with Dia de Reyes celebrations, the *cabildos de nación*, and the power of the Abakuá Society... Black participation in Dia de Reyes was organized by the *cabildos de nación* according to neighborhood and ethnicity... The Dia de Reyes celebration, also called the ‘Black Carnaval’, developed at a time when the *cabildos* celebrated publicly after permission for public performances was granted in 1823. Thus, their external purpose was to visually demonstrate their solidarity and
power through a public performance, while their internal purpose was mutual aid. (Bettelheim 1988, 140)

When this evidence is taken together with the work of scholars of the Big Drum Dance tradition in the isles of Carriacou and Grenada (Pearse 1956; McDaniel 1985; Hill 1998), an apparent common practice among the peoples of the Caribbean is revealed, with regard to their organization. Through these voluntary associations the communities of the enslaved and their descendents were able to develop and maintain their solidarity, as well as meet many of their diverse needs, such as those to associate on the basis of common interests, their religious, aesthetic and artistic needs. And, my study of the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival celebrations reveals continuity in this practice.

Associations in the Caribbean – American Community

As has been noted previously, the migrant communities of Caribbean people, who reside in various neighborhoods of the New York City, have been sites of a proliferation of these voluntary common-interests associations. For instance, migrants from the Dominican Republic have formed recreational groups within a relatively homogeneous community. These groups have been shown to substitute for the extended kinship and *compadrazgo* systems\(^{75}\) found in their homeland, and several of these cultural and civic associations maintain cultural ties to the

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\(^{75}\) The *compadrazgo* system is a type of fictive kinship in which lasting bonds are established between two or more persons as the consequence of a sacramental or other ceremony, such as in the role of parents and godparents. They refer to each other as *compadre* or *comadre*. Those in the position of godparents are usually of a higher social class and possess the capacity to donate to those of lower social standing.
Dominican Republic while facilitating life for the migrants in New York City. Additionally, these organizations mobilize the community in areas where there are language barriers, and facilitate access to social welfare, health, housing, unemployment benefits, the criminal justice system, and the labor market (Garcia 1986, 120).

Similar organizations were established from the earliest period of West Indian migration to New York City during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Organizations such as the Bermuda Benevolent Association organized (founded 1898), the Dorcas Committee of the Virgin Islands Congressional Council, the Montserrat Progressive Society (1930s), and the Danish Virgin Islands Ladies Mutual Aid Society (1915) - which became Virgin Islands Ladies Aid Society after US purchase of the islands in 1917, are some of the known organizations that acted as cultural bridges while catering to the multifarious needs of their members and the communities they served. Included among these types of organizations was the UNIA (Universal Negro Improvement Association) that was lead by Marcus Garvey (Watkins-Owens 2001, 43-46).

Scher makes the point that British West Indian adjustment and adaptation to the New York City life gave birth to various organizations whose function it was to provide a social meeting place for nationals from the same islands, and to provide financial assistance to recent immigrants or for those who found themselves in difficult financial situations. He also makes the observation that these benevolent
associations had their roots in the northern migrations of southern African Americans at the end of the nineteenth century, and the Caribbean versions were largely modeled on these institutions (Scher 2003,75). While there must be merit in this last assertion, there is tremendous evidence of these types of organizations in existence in the Caribbean, such as the Friendly Society Halls dating back to the early nineteenth century. And therefore such participation also reflected home-country patterns in which working people organized themselves in “friendly societies,” workingmen’s associations, political associations and women’s associations – often called unions, despite anti-combination legislation (Reddock 1994, 149; in Watkins- Owens 2001, 49). However, his assertion no doubt points to a type of organization that spanned across the African Diasporic spaces of the Caribbean and North America. These type of associations continue to exist today and some of them continue to be involved in the carnival arts in Brooklyn, as forerunners did in the nineteenth and early twentieth century Caribbean.

Organizations in the West Indian American Carnival – in the 40s

In 1947, the West Indies Day Committee was formally registered under the leadership of Jesse Waddell. This organization was responsible for the hosting and production of the West Indian Carnival parade on the streets of Harlem, New York for most of the next two decades until 1964. The United West Indian Day Development Association led by Lionel “Rufus” Goring then supplanted it, and the parade was moved to Brooklyn (Scher 2003, 75). In 1967, Carlos Lezama was
elected as the President of the then fledgling Carnival Association, and he served in this capacity for the next thirty-four years when he was succeed by his daughter – Yolanda Lezama-Clarke.76

Carlos Lezama migrated, together with his wife, from Trinidad to Brooklyn in the early 1950s. In Trinidad the couple had been actively involved in the carnival as masqueraders and Mr. Lezama also participated as a player of the steel pan. Thus upon arrival in New York he quickly gravitated towards the carnival celebrations held in Harlem at the time, and when the celebrations were moved to Brooklyn he joined his friend Rufus Goring in the organization of the event. Mr. Lezama lived in Crown Heights, Brooklyn for over thirty years, and was credited by many community organizations for initiating an historic peace process that brought factions together during the violent disturbances between African Americans, West Indians and Jews in 1991. In addition his efforts in promoting the rich culture of the Caribbean people, and thereby augmenting the cultural landscape of New York City, have not gone unrecognized but have been rewarded with accolades from various governors and mayors of the City.77

The West Indian American Day Carnival Association (WIADCA), which was led by Mr. Lezama and continues to oversee the annual production of the carnival festivities, is a non-profit 501(c) 3, tax-exempt organization that was started to promote and develop Caribbean culture, with special emphasis on the Caribbean culture.

76 “Carlos Lezama, Chairman Emeritus of New York’s West Indian Carnival,” Tribute to Carlos Lezama, magazine produced by the WIADCA, 2002, p. 3.
77 ibid.
American youth in New York City (Alexander 2003).\textsuperscript{78} During my field research trips to Brooklyn, I learnt that there were other organizations involved in the Carnival that were also registered as 501(c) 3 organizations. In particular, the Sesame Flyers community organization and the Caribbean Youth Panoramics were registered as such. 501(c) 3 is that section of the Internal Revenue Code under which non-profit organizations fall. This section provides for a broad category that includes most nonprofit hospitals, cultural organizations, traditional charities, schools, daycare centers and foundations, but it does not include mutual –benefit associations as labor unions, workers and consumers cooperatives, veterans organizations, or political parties. These organizations must serve one of several broadly defined collective purposes, and they receive tax advantages (DiMaggio and Anheier 1980, 138).

Organizations involved in the production of the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival undoubtedly have grasped the opportunity provided by the U.S. Internal Revenue Code to garner funding in support of their activities towards the Carnival, as well as to provide other services to the community in which they operate. Thus, in addition to its broadly stated goal of promotion and development of Caribbean culture, WIADCA aims to become a full-fledged year-round community-based organization. And in this regard, it has organized events in which participants are provided information on immigration, real estate, safety, and health insurance, as well as

cultural workshops. It has made presentations to the New York City Council on the Economics of the Labor Day Festival, and hosted Christmas parties in which gifts were distributed to hundreds of children. These parties were organized in partnership with Healthfirst with whom WIADCA continues to work in providing free and low cost health insurance to families (Lezama-Clarke 2003).  

Hence, while making ample use of the opportunities made available under U.S. legislation, the WIADCA continues in the tradition of the many common-interests groups that were established among sections of the Caribbean community since large-scale migration commenced at the beginning of the twentieth century. As well, the ventures of the association in the ongoing organization of the Carnival parade have served to confer power and status to the West Indian community by bringing visibility, pride, and a measure of respect to the community. Through the sheer force of the numbers that the festival brings to the Parkway annually, and the economic benefits that accrue to the city in the process, the Caribbean community is “invisible no more” (Kasinitz 2001).

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79 Yolanda Lezama-Clarke, “President’s Message” in WIADCA magazine 2003.
The Sesame Flyers International

The Sesame Flyers organization was formed in 1983 by Mr. William Munroe, Joe Charles and others. These founding members had all migrated to New York from the Caribbean. For instance, Mr. Munroe arrived in New York on Labor Day 1966, and was enticed to get involved by his friend, Kent Bernard and Wendell Mottley, both world-class athletes for Trinidad and Tobago at the time. From this initial introduction into the Brooklyn Carnival festivities, he became involved with the Silhouettes steelband in Brooklyn. In 2006, Mr. Munroe explained to me that the Sesame Flyers was formed because the original members thought it necessary for their children, born in the United States, to understand the cultural traditions of Trinidad and Tobago. Mr. Munroe remembers:

Prior to the adult band ... the organization was formed in 1983 and ... by myself and Joe Charles and a few other people, 'bout three other people... it was formed because we taught it was necessary for our children who were born here to ...understand the culture of Trinidad and Tobago and we wanted to spread that culture throughout the community because we felt that... when you look at the make up of Brooklyn as such...its basically Caribbean people, and we wanted Trinidad culture to be prominent in the face of the Brooklyn community. So we thought it was necessary to spread that culture in terms of the steelband, calypso, the limbo, the folk dance... and get our kids involved. (Munroe 2006, interview)
Towards this end the organization started the production of a children’s masquerade band as one of its first ventures. But it quickly evolved into a very multifaceted association. In its mission statement that is published on its website, the organization states that it aims:

> to provide a range of youth development, cultural, social welfare and supportive services to individuals and families residing in Brooklyn, New York. And it endeavors to empower the youth through carefully structured programs designed to address the needs of our children, their families and the community by presenting them with opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, technology and equipment that will prepare them for the challenges yet to come.\(^{80}\)

As such, the Sesame Flyers is not just a masquerade and steelband organization. It is a cultural organization involved in other activities in the community. The organization hosts programs at three different facilities in Brooklyn: including IS 68 in Carnasie - a junior High School, and Winthrop Junior High School, IS 232 on Winthrop Street in Brooklyn. There are also activities at its headquarters that are located on Church Avenue in Brooklyn. These activities do not only involve cultural performance, there are also academic and social development programs. At least 2500 people that go through the larger facilities in the junior high school, and a smaller amount are catered for at the organization’s headquarters,

\(^{80}\) [www.sesameflyers.org](http://www.sesameflyers.org)
because of the size of the facility. But this is run on a yearly, day-by-day basis, and includes the GED programs and the ESL programs. Many of these programs are funded by grants received from institutions such as Children Services, The Open Society Institute, the Department of Youth and Community Development, and the Youth Development Institute (See Fig. 5.3). In addition, the organization engages in immigration work not only for the kids but also for adults.

Although the City, State, and Federal governments fund the organization, it is not adequately funded to support full operation. The shortfall of the funds is generated by Sesame Flyers through the functions they host, such as the boat rides, the dances, and the activities held at the headquarters on Friday nights during the summer with the calypsonians and the comedians. And these funds generated through the organizational activities go right back into the programs that the organization provides for the community. Also, in the summer Sesame Flyers provide jobs for over 600 hundred young people. This too is partially funded by the city, and the organization is contracted by the city to generate jobs for these young people. It possesses a staff that goes out and finds employment for these young people, who are then placed in jobs that are paid for by the city (Munroe 2006, interview). Thus this organization, has integrated itself into the official network of the City government of New York, in order to better provide services for the Brooklyn Caribbean community.
Fig. 5.1: Mr. Munroe being present with a cake as a token of appreciation for his service to Beacon Summer Youth Camp at their closing ceremony August 2006.

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.2: Mr. Munroe receives a trophy for his services to the Beacon Youth Camp, and on the occasion of his retirement (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.3: Sesame Flyers 2008 Organizational Flow Chart (Courtesy Mr. Curtis Nelson, Executive Director)
In the early stages the organization catered primarily for Trinidadians, but it was soon realized that the entire community needed the services that the organization offered. So it opened its doors and offered the programs to everyone. There are a few other organizations that do similar things, but Mr. Munroe would like to see more since he is of the opinion that the services provided by Sesame Flyers are desperately needed in the community. Hence while the organization began with the aim of fulfilling a perceived cultural void in the lives of the children of its members, it soon acquired the traits historically associated with urban common-interests voluntary associations and pursued a multidimensional range of activities. In so doing it also succeeds in continuing along the path of the many voluntary associations that have served the communities of Caribbean people both on the various isles and in New York.

Fulfillment of The Cultural Mission

In pursuit of its mission to familiarize the children of Caribbean parentage in Brooklyn with the cultural traditions of the Caribbean, the organization has been tremendously successful. From its inception the group established a youth mas’ band that has participated in the Kiddies Carnival parade held on the weekend immediately preceding Labor Day, and they continue to do so. As a measure of the group’s success in acquainting the youth with their Caribbean cultural heritage, Mr. Munroe pointed out that when the youth who are born in the United States are asked where they are from, they never say they are United States citizens.
They say, I am from Trinidad, I’m from Jamaica, I’m from Grenada, that type of thing. They are proud Caribbean people ... they not saying that they don’t want to be Americans but the point is they are proud Caribbean people and they love what they do. They love being involved in the culture and they encourage, they also encourage the native American, not the Indians, but the people who are second generation American or third generation Americans to get involved in the culture, and they too are loving it. (Munroe 2006, interview)

This observation indicates that through the participation in the Carnival and other cultural activities the young people are encouraged to associate with and accept Caribbean forms of expression as their own. They are also implicitly encouraged to accept as homeland their respective Caribbean islands.

Sesame Flyers Mas’ Band

In 1992 the organization started an adult masquerade band while continuing to produce the children's band. This has grown to be one of the largest costumed bands that participate in the annual Parade of Bands on the Eastern Parkway. Prior to this there were other big masquerade bands such as Burrokeets, Hawks, Blackfoot, and D’Midas. Sesame Flyers got involved with the big mas’ bands in 1992 although the leaders of the organization were not mas’ producers, and do not design and produce costumes. Hence to make their foray into the arena of the large
masquerade bands, the organization had to acquire the services of an experienced mas’ designer. This necessity led the band to engage in the process of building a transnational network.

Mr. Munroe took a trip down to Trinidad in 1992, and consulted the renowned mas’ bandleader, designer Stephen Leung, who readily agreed to work as the band’s designer. Leung then came to New York and did the mas’ for the organization. He manufactured most of the costumes in Trinidad, brought them up in parts, and finished the costumes in Brooklyn. And, when he became ill in 1995, his understudy Curtis Eustace took over the role as designer. Since then the organization has utilized the services of other mas’ designers from Trinidad. The list includes: Ray Morris, the now deceased bandleader Neville, and the world renowned Peter Minshall, who gave a rendition of a portrayal he did in Trinidad the same year, 1997 (Munroe 2006, interview).

Association with Legacy

From 1998 Sesame Flyers engaged the services of Big Mike Antoine and Julia de la Bastide of the big Trinidad mas’ band Legacy as the designers for its mas’ band. And, since doing so, they have been winners of the competition, including the years 2006 and 2007. The band’s 2006 masquerade presentation was Pow Wow Fantasy, a tribute to the Native American Indians. It was thought suitable because 2006 was recognized by the United Nations as the year of the American Indian. This also met
one of the aims of the association to produce masquerade based on historical, cultural, or educational themes. About this portrayal Mr. Munroe notes:

    Pow Wow Fantasy, it is a Tribute to the American Indians, and Mike thought it was suitable for this year because this is the overall theme of the American Indians; this year is the year of the Indian I think, so... in other words trying to come with a tribute to the American Indians...the whole idea behind it, to link the Trinidad and Tobago culture with the American Indian. In Trinidad we play Indian, and we do Indian mas’. We do Indian mas’ because of what we’ve seen in the movies, and maybe some people read books on Indians, but ...what we do is just basic Indian, this is not. What we are doing is not just an Indian mas’; but we’re doing a tribute to the Indian population...each section is going to be delegated to one particular tribe... We can’t do all the tribes because ... financially it doesn’t permit us to do that. But we have selected eight different tribes. (Munroe 2006, interview)

The production of “Pow Wow Fantasy” also served to continue aspects of the Trinidadian tradition of mas’, where bands of Native American Indian mas’ are produced annually. Hence conceptually as well as physically (with the role of the mas’ designers) transnational linkages were made in the production and display of this portrayal.
Fig. 5.4: Pow Wow Fantasy parade on Eastern Parkway on Labor Day 2006

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Although the leaders of the Trinidad mas’ band Legacy are the designers for the Sesame Flyers, the mas’ band of the organization operates totally independent of the Trinidad band with which Antoine and de La Bastide are associated, Legacy, formally Legends. Sesame Flyers always present a different theme from that which Legacy presents in Trinidad. This is necessary because it is economically better for the Sesame Flyers, since if this were not done that way people who played mas’ in
Trinidad would just come in and want to play with their costumes. Nonetheless, there are a number of people, who come up from the islands to participate.

In terms of Trinidad Carnival, the Sesame Flyers organization has reciprocated by assuming responsibility for registration of masqueraders from New York for the Legacy mas’ band in Trinidad. And annually, in excess of 300 people are registered to play mas’ in the Trinidad Carnival. The leaders of Legacy send the information from Trinidad to New York. They send pictures of the various sections, and this process has been made much easier with the accessibility afforded by the Internet. So, prospective masqueraders would view the pictures on online and call the offices of Sesame Flyers. They then go into the organization’s offices and fill out the registration forms just as they would do in the Brooklyn mas’ camp of Sesame Flyers, or as they would do in Trinidad. A financial deposit is paid, and when they get down to Trinidad, they pay the balance, or they can pay the balance in New York, the transaction being done via the computer again (Munroe 2006, interview).

This reciprocal relationship between Sesame Flyers and the Legacy mas’ band of Trinidad serves to further consolidate the transnational ties that they have established. It also reveals the increasing transnational nature of the Carnival in Brooklyn in which individuals and organizations work across geographical borders to produce the events in which they are engaged. And, this is increasingly facilitated by the technological changes in communication, as transactions such as those described above have been made exceedingly easy to achieve. With the raise and
growth of the Internet, establishment and maintenance of organizational networks have been made much easier.

Soca Bands on the Parkway

The soca music bands got involved in playing music for the Labor Day Carnival around the late 1980s. And they too have become part of the transnational network of, not only, the Sesame Flyers but also the Brooklyn Carnival as a whole. In terms of Sesame Flyers, the band Atlantik of Trinidad was the first band to play music for the organization’s Labor Day masquerade presentation. The Trinidad soca music band, Trafik, provided the musical accompaniment for the mas’ band during the years 2004-2006. The organization has also used the services of popular Trinidad soca artiste Machel Montano and his band Xtatik, as well as Naya George and his band Invasion. His brother Iwer George has also participated, and so too the Barbadian band Krosfyah and their lead singer Edwin Yearwood (Munroe 2006, interview).

The presence of Krosfyah points to the broad Caribbean appeal that Sesame Flyers seeks in its activities. It caters to anyone who wants to work with the organization. Mr. Munroe points out that:

They are trying to bridge the gap, in terms of getting a cross section of the Jamaican, the Trinidadian, the Barbadian, and the Haitian – all these people involved to make it a callaloo of masqueraders on Eastern Parkway. It is a West Indian festival in the true sense of the word, and there has also been a
lot of Vincentians, St. Lucians, and Bajans, who play their mas’ with Sesame Flyers. (Munroe 2006, interview)

The participation of some of the prominent Caribbean soca artistes, including Barbadian female soca diva Allison Hinds, on a truck in the organization’s 2007 presentation is testimony to the efforts of the organization to embrace the West Indian populace in Brooklyn.

It can therefore be said that as a voluntary organization of immigrants in an urban setting, the Sesame Flyers meets the expectations of such common-interests organizations. It has grown into a multifaceted organization that caters for the diverse needs and interests of the community it serves. It provides social, recreational, educational, and cultural programs and activities. In so doing it actively prepares the youth to be better able to participate and succeed in the environment of Brooklyn, New York and North America in general. But it also enthusiastically engages these youth with the cultural traditions of the Caribbean in order that they develop a greater appreciation of the background from which they and their parents came. To facilitate this, the organization has built a transnational network that incorporates the services of a variety of artistes with varied skills who contribute to its multidimensional programs. In addition to those mentioned in this chapter, there are those individuals mentioned elsewhere in this work, such as Gene and Roseanne Toney who inform the Caribbean dance program with their wide knowledge and
skills, and those persons such as Keith Marcelle and Pelham Goddard and others who lead the Sesame Flyers Steel Orchestra.

The Labor Day Carnival Parade

I have addressed the activity of the community organization, the Sesame Flyers, and have shown that while it is very a multifaceted organization it made its initial foray into community activity by producing a children’s mas’ band. This was started with the explicit intention of inculcating the youth with a better sense of their Caribbean cultural heritage. The organization has become more involved in the Brooklyn Carnival festivities with the production of an adult mas’ band and a steel orchestra for the youth. These bands, together with the activities associated with their production, have successfully contributed to the development of the strengthening of a sense of belonging to a Caribbean community among the youth and others who participate. The question arises: how does participation in these street processions facilitate the consolidation of solidarity and a sense of oneness with the Caribbean American community? In an attempt to answer this question I will now examine the various parades/processions that constitute the major street events of the Brooklyn Labor Day Carnival celebrations.

This festive organization of the crowd must be first of all concrete and sensual. Even the pressing throng, the physical contact of bodies, acquires a certain meaning. The individual feels that he is an indissoluble part of the collectivity, a member of the people’s mass body. In this whole the individual body ceases to a
certain extent to be itself; it is possible, so to say, to exchange of bodies, to be renewed (through change of costume and mask). At the same time the people become aware of their sensual bodily unity and community. (Bakhtin 1999, 231)

In the above passage Bakhtin points to the solidarity of the carnival crowd. He notes that in such a crowd the individual assumes the role of an “indissoluble part of the collective,” and this is undoubtedly the case with the crowds that frequent the spaces of the Brooklyn Carnival. The thousands of individuals who participate in the Labor Day parade on the Eastern Parkway, the J’ouvert festivities in the wee hours of that morning, and the Kiddies Carnival on the Saturday prior, certainly cease to be just a gathering of individuals. They acquire the state of that of a “collectivity,” a “festive organization” in which a sense of the whole is realized and experienced by all. This phenomenon is experience by both spectators and revelers alike, and in so doing group solidarity and a sense of oneness as a community is consolidated.

Further, the performance activities of the Carnival celebrations that communally engage the participants in dance, song, and concerted display of their costumes, facilitates the individual’s experience of being part of an “indissoluble whole.” For instance, when a group of Haitian immigrants dance, sing in call-and-response fashion, and shake their flags in concert, their experience is a shared one in which the sense of belonging may override any sense of individuality and distinctiveness. The same is true of the steelband-led revelers in J’ouvert who also jointly sing, dance and play their percussion instrument, or the example of the children in the Kiddies Carnival parade who are taken along the
procession route by the parents and elders. They dance, sing and display their costumes, but also endure the tiredness and heat of the sun collectively. This setting of the carnival crowd provides the atmosphere in which community bonds can be strengthened. And, if accompanied by the accoutrements of nationality and ethnicity, can serve to foster and bind associations based on national origin and shared cultural traditions and practices. Victor Turner noted that:

In the celebratory process we cannot detach the participants from what they participate in, the subject from the object. From the subject’s sensorium, his withinside, such clusters are no longer experienced as detached from him, held at arm’s length, merely cognized. They invade him, alter his mode of perceiving, daze or dazzle him. He is made vulnerable to imprintment by whatever message is being conveyed by the symbolic cluster. In celebration, private a space is thus socialized, enculturated; social space is correspondingly made private. (Turner 1982, 19)

It is therefore in this context that I examine the parades of the Brooklyn Carnival as sites in which the Caribbean community's sense of itself is articulated and consolidated. I will therefore explore the proliferation of Caribbean national flags in the Eastern Parkway Parade as a reinterpretation of the Nation dance in Grenada and Carriacou, and also look at this parade venue as a site in which differing aesthetics of different groups compete. I will also scrutinize the restrictive practices of the city authorities in the efforts to shape and control this parade. In
addition, I aim to examine the j’ouvert celebrations as repository of for the maintenance of the older musical practices, which is seen in the abundance of makeshift percussive instruments and the steelband. And, I argue that the J’ouvert reveals itself as an event that embodies, in the mask and music ensembles, the historical narrative of the traditions of masking in the Caribbean. And, this is also seen in the Children’s “Kiddies” Carnival, in which aesthetic values and consciousness with regard to the Carnival and Caribbean cultural practice in general are instilled in the youth, thereby bolstering their sense of community and ensuring its durability.

The Big Drum Nation Dance

The Big Drum or nation dance of Carriacou, as it is realized today, is a folk entertainment/religion of the people. The nation dance is performed at weddings, lengthy funeral rites, and for special events such as the acquisition of new property. It is usually held at night and often includes feasting, socializing, and other activities, for the purpose of propitiating the ancestors (Hill 1998,186). Historically, the Big Drum Dance has been associated with burial rites in which the nation dances of the Cromanti, Akan, Igbo and Manding ethnic groups, among others, are performed. Traditionally, a libation ritual is performed to call the presence of the ancestors into the dance circle, and these ancestors are allowed their time and space to dance. When the living begin dancing, it is thought that the songs, drum rhythms and dance
movements facilitate their bonding with the ancestral past, connecting them with their ancestral “nation” (McDaniel 1985).

The French census of Carriacou of 1750 lists the following African nations: Congo, Arada, Bambara, Moko, Manding, Igbo, Aura, and Anan. And the nation dance was probably started in the mid-eighteenth century in celebratory circumstances such as Christmas, when the Mandingos, Igbos, Congos and others formed themselves in exclusive groups and endeavored to outdo each other with the loudness of their music and songs peculiar to their country of origin. In Carriacou, the separate ethnic groups combined to jointly hold nation dances, and following 1783 when the British colonialists took control of the island, the Cromantis who came from present-day Ghana joined in the Big Drum celebrations (McDaniel 1998; Hill 1998, 185).

The nation dances of the Big Drum include Cromanti, Igbo, Manding, Arada, Chamba, Banda, Temne, Moko. And these are often followed by Creole dances such as the Old Bongo, Hallechord, Bele Kawe, Gwe Bele, Juba (Pearse 1956; McDaniel 2002:130). The establishment of these nation groups, and their practice of the Big Drum dance in Carriacou and Grenada, is comparable to Caribbean religious ritual traditions. For instance, the Orisha of Trinidad and the Lucumi of Cuba are largely representative of the Yoruba nation. And in Haiti, there were seventeen nanchons (nations) derived from separate ethnic groups in Africa, such as the Rada, Kongo, Nago, Igbo on whom the various deities and different sects of African-derived
religions were based (Hill 1998, 183). Further, drum codes or the beats of codes served as emblems of deities related to their different ethnicities, a practice similar to that among Afro-Brazilians in which deities and African nations are named and called by drum rhythms (Herskovits 1944, 491; in McDaniel 2002).

Hill notes that the nation dance functioned to unite various African groups in the French Caribbean with special rhythms that were associated with specific nations (McDaniel 1998, 70). It provided the enslaved with a dignified identity, that of "African". Thus, Carriacouans were able to define themselves and their culture as well, and the nation dances within the Big Drum dance were key to this. The nation dances are therefore sacred dances, and are a way of pledging allegiance to Africa before the rest of the Big Drum dance continues (Hill 1998, 188-89).

In comparing the Big Drum of Carriacou and the Trinidad Carnival, Hill posits that there are undeniable similarities between these two ritualistic festivals. Both facilitate the unifying of identities, and include customs that are verifiably African while containing European customs. Carnival contains Chinese, Asian Indian, and American Indian customs as well. And, Carriacou’s Big Drum and Trinidad’s Carnival have acted as rituals for rebellion (Hill 1998, 191-192). The Brooklyn Carnival mirrors these Caribbean festivals in some respects. Like the Big Drum dance it provides a performance occasion in which people, who have been separated from their places of origin, are able to reestablish psychological, spiritual, and physical
links with their places of origin, thereby reaffirming their Caribbeanness in the space of the New York metropolis.

Labor Day Parade: Dance of Nations

In the mid-1990s, during what may be described as my pre-academic visits to the Brooklyn Labor Day Parade, I noticed the emerging prominence of flags on the Eastern Parkway. Both spectators and revelers carried these flags of the various island states of the Caribbean, and I was struck by the magnitude of their numbers as well as the fact that they were not very prominent during an earlier visit to the parade in 1990. I was also struck by the tremendous response of the throngs of people on the Parkway to the “roll call of nations” (Hill 1998) that was taken by Ronnie McIntosh, lead singer of the band Massive Shandileer in 1995. As Ronnie – before going into his hit of that year “Ah Come Back Home” - called out: “Anybody from Barbados” “Anybody from Guyana...from St. Lucia ... from Jamaica... from Trinidad” and so on, the multitudes would respond vociferously “yeah” and vigorously wave the respective national flags of the various island states.81

This propensity to wave during the course of the celebrations undoubtedly represents a continuation of the traditional practice of carrying flags and standards during the carnival parade in the Caribbean, but it also represented the lasting influence of the 1991 road march hit of Austin Lyons, Superblue (formerly Blue Boy), who in that calypso called on revelers to “Get Something an’ Wave.” The

81 Personal observation, 1995.
response of Caribbean people in New York in the 1990s to this clarion call evolved into a waving of national flags. In so doing the Brooklyn Labor Day celebrations have developed into a parade of Caribbean nations, and in this context can be viewed as a “reinterpretation” (Herskovits 1947) of the Big Drum nation dance of Carriacou and similar practices among the people of the Caribbean. Just as the Big Drum dances served in part to affirm African identity among the participant populations who were removed from their various places of origin in Africa, the proliferation of flags in the Brooklyn Carnival calls attention to the nationalities of the immigrants in their new place of abode. This is done while participating in a carnival festival that fosters a unified sense of Caribbeanness. Speaking about the Labor Day Carnival, Grenadian national Mr. Noel expressed the following opinion:

It reflects the West Indian culture. And you could tell by the flags. The flags and the t-shirt is what dominate the Carnival right now. No one is teaching anybody here how to make costumes... you may go to a mas’ camp here and are making costumes, one or two young people are sticking lil sequences and stuff, but that’s about it. There is no set educational opportunity, anything in place to teach young people about the history of mas’, and why we should continue the making of the mas’. And that is what is missing...But there is a reflection as it pertains to t-shirts and flags...There is as much Jamaican flags on the Parkway as there is Trinidadian flags; there is as much Haitian flags as there is Trinidadian flags; there is as much Grenadian flags as...on the Parkway. (Noel 2006, interview)
Figures 5.11 and 5.12 show one of the bands representative of the Haitian community in Brooklyn New York. The band is clearly recognizable by the proliferation of Haitian national flags, and while the revelers are devoid of masquerade costumes the vast majority of them are clothed in the blue, red and white of this symbol of Haiti’s existence as a nation state. The revelers dance to the strains of music played by the band, and they actively engage in a call-and-response performance in which they vigorously shake their flags in reply to the commands of lead singer/chantwell. The text of his song translates, in part, as follows:

Haiti, New York is for you (c’est pour ou)

You can do what you want, feel comfortable

Shake them (souké yo)

He, the lead singer, calls on the members of the Haitian community in New York to feel comfortable, since they have a right to be there (New York is for you). He also calls on the revelers to be assertive (You can do what you want) by increasing their visibility. And the revelers respond to the command “shake them” vigorously waving their flags. While doing this they chant “Bois!” This act points to the possible dual significance of the command “shake them,” for in addition of referring to the waving of the flags during the carnival parade, it suggests that they
should confidently assert themselves in the community at large, and in the space
that is the New York metropolis. The retort “Bois!” - the stick – positions a stance
that is symbolic of boldness, resistance and defiance.\(^2\)

Figures 5.6 to 5.12 show the use of the national flags of other Caribbean
nations to assert the presence of people of the Caribbean countries in New York.
This foregrounding of the national flags by the different groups may be taken as part
of the drive to develop deeper bonds of unity within the Caribbean community in
Brooklyn. For while one can focus on the particularity of the individual national
flags that are displayed, these revelers in Brooklyn are in fact participating in what
has developed into a common practice. So, not only do they engage in the revelry of
a common festival, but also they are united in utilizing the same means (prominence
of national flags) to articulate their places of origin in the Caribbean and their unity
as communities with the larger Caribbean community in Brooklyn. Nonetheless, the
deliberate representation of Caribbean nations in the parade also point to
divergences and fissures that exist in the theme of commonality. The issue of
difference surfaces, and this is evident in some aspects of the parade.

\(^{2}\) The use of “shake them” in this manner is similar to the way in which the calypsonian Penguin, in his
1980 calypso, The Devil, uses “shakin’ up dey tail in people face”, literally referring to shakin’ one’s
behind, but also referring to being an affront to expectations in norms and behavior. The interpretation
given to the use of “Bois” is based on the practice in the performance of the kalinda stickfight, which is
held during the carnival celebrations annually in Trinidad, where “bois” is often chanted to encourage the
combatants in courage, bravery, and boldness to repel the opponent’s attacks and counter with attacks of
one’s own.
Fig. 5.6: Truck with a group of Antiguan musicians, the anniversary of the islands political independence is clearly advertised. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.7: Revelers move along with the Barbadian band with flags and national colors on display. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.8: Truck with Jamaican Flags boldly displayed. Note the picture of Jamaican icon and music legend Bob Marley in the foreground. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.9: Band from the isles of St. Kitts-Nevis (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.10: The Flag of St. Lucia on display. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.11: Haitian revelers dance along Eastern Parkway with national flags unfurled.

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig.5.12: Haitian musicians stir up the crowd of revelers. (Photograph by Ken Archer
Brooklyn 2006)
Different Aesthetics

The multicultural nature of Brooklyn and the diversity of the Caribbean groups that participate in the West Indian America Carnival Parade have ensured divergences to the Trinidad Carnival model that has served as the template for the festival throughout its history, and there are other Caribbean and African-American influences. Trinidadian soca and calypso are heard alongside Haitian konpas, Jamaican reggae, Martiniquan zouk, and other musical offerings from the islands of Barbados, Grenada, and even Panama (Allen 2003, 268). In addition, Kasinitz points out that, there has developed a generational split that is revealed in the attitude of the participants towards calypso and reggae, Trinidadian and Jamaican respectively. The younger generation of the Caribbean immigrants in the New York generally gravitates towards the reggae irrespective of the nationality of origin in the Caribbean (Kasinitz 2001, 103-4). These assessments by these scholars point to the fact that the Carnival in Brooklyn has developed into a site in which differing aesthetics compete.

Historical accounts of the Trinidad Carnival reveals the Carnival as a site for the competing aesthetics of the elites in the society and those who are considered to occupy the lower stratum. And the Brooklyn carnival continues to function as such a site, although the competing sections differ from the elite/lower class dichotomy. This is reflected in the difference between the groups of different West Indian

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83 Cowley 1996.
origin. Early in my stay in Brooklyn in August 2006, I learnt that the association had called for costumed bands only in the Parade, and that any bands in T-shirts would bring up the rear. Mr. Munroe indicated:

They going to try to eliminate as many t-shirt bands as possible; but if there is a t-shirt band, that band has to wait until all the costumed bands go down the Parkway; then come down the Parkway; and that means... they not gonna get very far, because at 6 o’clock they going to stop on the Parkway; so whatever block you get to that’s where you gonna have to turn off. (Munroe 2006, interview)

I am of the opinion that this call went directly against the groups of non-Trinidadian origin. And, it was influenced by the Trinidadians, who make up the bulk of the WIADCA and is recognized as starting the festival historically, asserting their assumed experienced with masking in comparison with the other Caribbean isles. As well, it speaks to a divide between the older generation and the throngs of youth, who flock the Parkway and may view the parade as a big street party filled with the music produced by their favorite soca, zouk and dancehall music artistes. Barbadian George Whitehead’s opinion is very instructive of this conflict:

Carnival is a day ... us in the Caribbean, we know, we jump with our costumes, and as much as we get drunk or we get high, as little bit of this a little bit of both, but we still are they as people portraying our different cultures or playing, what we call in Trinidad mas’. The Eastern Parkway has
lost the culture of the mas’... We used to being seen with numbers of 2000; Sesame Flyers, Burrokeets, Utica Boys; and right now for the past two years that culture is no more. It just a matter that you get there and every body is pushed off the road. There is no relaxed atmosphere and at the end of the day, people don’t enjoy, the revelers are not coming to the Parkway. The Parkway for the past two years has not been revelers. All it has been a pack of jump up, people with t-shirts”... And I don’t think its the right way for me to express Slope and Destination Barbados; other people feel it’s the right way but I personally don’t feel that, and I could say that comfortable because in the past seven years we have had NBC ABC, Channel One, came to my location and the cover our Carnivals, but every time you speak to them they say that it is not as convenient. And even ABC, NBC, they not coming to our parades. But we have a parade – Macy’s, Columbus, Spanish – every other parade is covered. Every other parade is not as old as the Caribbean American Carnival ... so what we have lost is the message on the Parkway, there is no message. Today is a bunch of revelers ... People come to spend 100 200 dollars for costumes, they want to go on the Parkway and jump up and have a fine time. But today there is no control between the revelers and the costumed people, and for the past couple years there have been too much tension between the non-costumed and the costumed people. And that has been one of the reasons I have not been participating in the parade. (Whitehead 2006, interview)
Trinidadian mas’ producer Earl Patterson expressed similar views in saying:

It is the same thing ... the bikini and the beads (in Trinidad) compared to costumes; here is too much t-shirts, because you have every nationality on the road now...They make it a West Indian American festival, which is good, but you should at least call them to make, produce the costume of their country or something... so that people would come to look at it. (Patterson 2006, interview)

In their remarks Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Patterson make a passionate case for the display of costumes rather than t-shirts that are favored by the many. In so doing Whitehead points to the “tension between the non-costumed and the costumed,” and the aesthetic contest that unfolds on Eastern Parkway. He also argues for the costumes in order to bring more prestige and national prominence to the festival within the United States.

However, the 2006 parade did not proceed as the WIADCA had wished. But the t-shirt bands of Jamaicans, Barbadians and Haitians passed very early on in the parade, to the extent that some of the spectators in the vicinity of where I stood expressed surprise at how early the Jamaican band was going by. I interpreted this as open disregard for the intentions of the organizing committee as these groups claimed their space just as they do with the flags and music. So while it cannot be denied that the festival represents a strong rallying point for the Caribbean community as a whole, within it there exists these elements of conflict as revealed in
the aesthetic divide between t-shirt and costumed bands; between the youth, who populate these bands that also offer the latest styles of Caribbean music that they find most appealing, and the older generation. It is also a rallying point for those who don the colorful costumes in revelry on the Parkway. Together they all partake in the Caribbean diversity that the festival offers, and all come away with a sense of Caribbeanness, notwithstanding the many streams.

Control of the festival

The early West Indian Carnival in Harlem in the 1950s was a restricted affair. It was an orderly procession in which politicians and dignitaries paraded together with costumed revelers, and police barricades were used to separate the parade from the spectators (Allen 2003:257). This description of the Carnival as a restricted, orderly procession remains valid for the parade that now proceeds along East Parkway, Brooklyn annually. But, as Kasinitz (2001) notes:

In sharp contrast to most of New York’s numerous “ethnic” festivals, the Carnival lacks a centralized structure. The WIADCA obtains the needed permits and deals with city officials, yet its members are more coordinators than leaders. (Kasinitz 2001, 97)

and
Structure breaks down almost immediately. Bands stop, change direction, or simply get bogged down in a dancing mass of humanity. The distinction between participant and spectator quickly disappears, despite the concerted efforts of the police to maintain it. Some bands do not even finish the three-mile route in the allotted six hours. As a dramatic event, Carnival is strikingly leaderless. There are themes and a certain ebb and flow, but no particular center or head. (Kasinitz 2001, 99)

These observations support the view that Carnival “does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectator” (Bakhtin 1968:7 in Kasinitz 2001:93), and the formal structure of normal everyday existence is subverted. While there is much validity to these positions, as Kasinitz himself observes, these views are more fully realized in the children’s and J’ouvert parades. In many ways the Eastern Parkway Parade, the spectacle organized by WIADCA, still mirrors the description of the 1950s Carnival in Harlem, a description that aligns, rather than contrasts, it to the rest of New York’s “ethnic” festivals.

Since the Reverend Jesse Jackson participated in the parade of 1984 (Kasinitz 2001), the numbers of politicians participating has steadily grown. I first noticed this aspect of the parade during my first visit to the festival in 1990, and noted that it was maintained as an integral part of the parade in my other visits during the mid 1990s. In 2006, it being a congressional election year, the parade was proliferated
with presence of politicians and their supporters, who utilized it as a campaign site in attempts to woo the support and vote of the Caribbean community.

These groups actually move along the parade route in extremely orderly fashion, and they precede the procession of masquerade bands, occupying valuable time that the revelers can utilize. Thus, while the carnival parade may assume some elements of an unstructured character, the participation of the politicians and their activity clearly links it to the ruling structures of the city, state and U.S. governmental establishment in general (See Fig. 5.13 to 5.17). In addition the activity of these politicians indicates that the vast numbers of the Caribbean people, who visit the Eastern Parkway on Labor Day, have developed into a community that has come to be regarded extremely seriously by aspirants for political office.
Fig. 5.13: Supporters of congressional candidate Barron parade on Eastern Parkway

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.14: Supporters of another candidate campaign on the Parade Route

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.15: Supporters of politician Yvette Clarke campaign on Eastern Parkway

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig.5.16: Supporters of candidate Adams campaign during the Parade (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.17: The Green Party takes its message along the Parkway. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)

Police

Commenting on the West Indian Carnival celebration in Toronto Canada, Gallaugher has noted that barriers (physical and otherwise) are erected by the elite and representatives of the dominant culture to restrict the Caribana festival, and shape the perception of this festival and all of Caribbean culture as the exotic other, desired for its color, gait, splendor, but feared for its barbarity and potential for
violence. However, its virtues are extolled because of its potential as a tourist attraction and revenue earner for Metropolitan Toronto (Gallaugher 1995). Similar observations have been made about the Carnival in Brooklyn.

Grant has observed the outcries by carnival proprietors, patrons and revelers about the increasing levels of police harassment, and the insensitivity of NYPD officers leading up to the festival parade, when clubs have been closed down, proprietors arrested, and equipment seized. He has noted that:

In 1999, a new level of restriction was reached when on Eastern ‘Caribbean’ Parkway, Carnival lovers and followers were herded like cattle into destinations secluded by the police. This discriminatory act was a replication of what happened two days before at the Million Youth March in Harlem where a very large contingent of police officers greatly outnumbered the marchers and had Harlem under siege. (Grant 2004, 75)

This continued during Labor Day 2002 when metal barricades were placed throughout the length of the Parkway, and revelers were not allowed into the streets while bands passed by. Police officers manned these barriers and kept a tight control of the movement of people on the sidewalks and the street (Grant 2004, 43). Like Gallaugher, Grant comments that, far from seeking to put a stop to the festival, the city tolerates it because of the vast financial benefits that accrue to the city’s
coffers when the largest street parade in the United States is hosted annually on Labor Day.

Figures 5.18 to 5.21 illustrate that the state of affairs described above has persisted. The police man the trucks and attempt to control the people traffic on the route. Pat Phillips had this to say about the activity of New York's finest during the early J'ouvert morning celebrations:

I don't go on the Parkway anymore...but the last couple of years the restrictions limit the J'ouvert a lot, in the sense that you can't go into a band if you don't have a shirt...what happened to me down on Grand Army Plaza ...I went up with the first band and wanted to walk back down to hear the bands coming up, and I couldn't do that; they stopping you. You can't even get into a band. If you miss your band, you have to go all around and come around back from Grand Army Plaza...and the thing about it, the police control the J'ouvert; it have a police in your truck with the driver. Right now we wanted to come for J'ouvert, but ...you have to get insurance, you have to get a permit; you have to pay then to come on the street. (Phillips 2006, interview)

These comments mirror my observations of the festivities in the parade on Eastern Parkway that occurs later on Labor Day. Spectators are made to stand behind the barricades and maskers/revelers are prevented from returning down the route once they have passed with their bands. So when bands passed, the police would coral the throngs of youth and walk behind them with movable fences that
they also used to allow people to cross the street. However, this did not last and was openly defied by the youth, particularly those of the Haitian bands who just walked down the route in large numbers.
Fig. 5.18: Police with movable fences on Labor Day  (Photograph by Ken Archer
Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.19: Police provide temporary crosswalk for spectators wanting to go from one side of the Parkway to another. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.20: Policemen ride one of the music trucks on the Parkway. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Fig. 5.21: A section of New York’s finest that man the route during the Labor Day Carnival festivities (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
Commenting on the Carnival in general Phillips makes these additional observations:

Instead of going forward; it went back...in terms of the music, the bands, ...in the ’70s, Tropicans, even in Moods early days, from the time it get warm, we was practicing...which was like 2-3 months before Labor Day. Now you have a band playing a week before, 2 weeks before, 3 weeks before. In them times from the time it get warm, you looking for a yard...you starting to play pan...the place was buzzing. It was a Carnival type atmosphere. You see how dead it is now; you don’t even know is Labor Day...In that time the whole place used to be lively...mas’ camps and all them kinda thing, but even I ride this year and I eh getting no kinda vibes. (Phillips 2006, interview)

About the City’s activity he notes:

The way how they deal with it...now they have a problem. In them times they never used to bother you. Now certain areas you can’t rehearse. From the time 9-10 o’clock, somebody call...that is what they claim...cops come...somebody call, and you have to stop. Now if you have a backyard party in you backyard, police come and stop it...that is how it reach. Since Giuliani was mayor, the whole thing change up. You coulda walk with this (a beer) in the road...now in here (the yard), if they passing they come and give you a problem...now you get a ticket for that stuff. (Phillips 2006, interview)

Further:
You see people are envious; and the Trinidadians is the one that started the Labor Day thing and get that whole Carnival atmosphere. Then other countries came in...but (in an undertone), I didn’t want to say this, the white people and stuff, they don’t want us to have fun...Labor Day is the time the most people does gather in this place, and the amount ah black people does be together and all that, they get scared. To be honest with you, for years the Jews trying to get it out the Eastern Parkway. (Phillips 2006, interview)

These views express some of the frustrations felt by participants in the carnival activities in Brooklyn. And this evidence confirms that by and large the Labor Day festival continues to be a restricted affair, just as its forerunner that was held in Harlem back in the 1950s, when police barricades were used to separate the revelers from the spectators. These measures of control, coupled with opinions such as those expressed by Mr. Phillips, suggest that this practice by the city's law enforcement agencies maybe viewed as continued efforts to impose the aesthetics and standards expected of the numerous parades that occur in New York and other parts of the United States. But it may also point to the rejection of an aesthetic associated with perceived unruly behavior and violence of the Caribbean Carnival celebrations. In this regard it mirrors the efforts of the 19th century authorities in their attempt to control the Carnival in Trinidad at that time. And, it may serve as a rallying point around which the community can further galvanize itself to articulate its difference, and stand apart from, other communities in New York.
J’ouvert

In the Carnival of the Caribbean many aspects of the 19th century celebrations that faced the wrath of the colonial authorities have persisted to this day. This is particularly evident in the j’ouvert (pre-dawn) celebrations that take place in the wee hours of the morning at the onset of the carnival festivities. In the street procession of this event many of the traditional masquerade characters first observed in the 19th century Carnival, such as the Jab Molassie and devil mas’, the mud/earth mas’ and so on, are still seen. It has been noted that following the banning of the canboulay and its demise, the j’ouvert became the site in which the masking, behavior and revelry associated canboulay took residence (Rohlehr 1990). J’ouvert celebrations in Brooklyn continue in the vein of the long-standing Caribbean practice, and in it can be observed the traditional alongside the more recent practices, particularly with regard to the use of percussion instruments.

The Brooklyn J’ouvert arose in the 1980s out of impromptu celebrations. This followed fetes on the night of the Sunday preceding the Labor Day parade, and small groups of partygoers, steel pan players and enthusiasts took the revelry on the streets of the Flatbush area of Brooklyn (Allen and Slater 2001; Allen 2003). These initial celebratory forays have, over the last couple decades, grown into a mass

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84 Also jouvay; street festivities that take place in the early hours of Carnival Monday in Trinidad; it is also observed in the Carnivals of other Caribbean isles such as Grenada. In Brooklyn, j’ouvert is held in the early hours of the morning of Labor Day, prior to the Carnival Parade hosted on Eastern Parkway later in the day.

85 Procession that was held in Trinidad during the 19th century following the Emancipation from slavery in which the former slaves and their descendants commemorated their freedom; it was held during the month of August – Emancipation being attained on August 1st, 1938.
activity in which hundreds of thousands participate. J’ouvert City International, in which the steelbands of Brooklyn play a large role, manages the early morning celebration. And it operates independently of the WIADCA Eastern Parkway parade, with its own route that proceeds from the Brooklyn Museum along Flatbush Ave, then along Empire Boulevard, and onto Nostrand Avenue.

The efforts to control and restrict the Caribbean Carnival parade on Eastern Parkway have already been noted. And the organizers, the police and the city authorities achieve a large measure of success in this regard, although not entirely. For while the division between “spectators and actors” becomes less rigid as some spectators join in the revelry as the bands pass by, the situation in the Parkway parade is much more structured than what pertains in the context of the J’ouvert and the Kiddies Carnival\textsuperscript{86} parade. In these processions the demarcation between spectators and masqueraders is virtually nonexistent along the parade routes.

Like the Eastern Parkway Labor Day Parade, the children’s parade regains order at the end, when the bands arrive at the stage where they display themselves for the judges. On the other hand, the j’ouvert parade becomes a mass of moving bodies in which the masqueraders may not be readily discernible, even at the judging points. It attains a state closer to the Bakhtinian notions of Carnival that does not acknowledge the spectator/actor divide.

\textsuperscript{86} This is the carnival procession/parade in which bands of children masqueraders participate. In Trinidad there are many different competitions for these children’s bands that are held in the weeks leading up to the main festival days. In Brooklyn the “Kiddies Carnival” is held on the Sunday preceding Labor Day, and the procession moves along its own route starting on St. John’s, then onto Franklyn Ave, then President Street, before entering the grounds of the Brooklyn Museum where judging is done.
J’ouvert: a repository of the traditional

When the tradition of the 19th Century Canboulay was brought into the pre-Lenten Trinidad Carnival, “j’ouvert became an arena for African-derived percussion, witty satire singing, sardonic costuming, and more recently, lively steelband music” (Stuempfle 1995, 203-204 in Allen 2003, 256). While this state of affairs has been maintained to a great extent, there has been intrusion of more recent, modern practices into the j’ouvert arena. The Trinidad J’ouvert has long been visited by the presence of the DJs and their sound systems,87 which, together with the soca bands with their sound systems, dominate the soundscape during the events of Carnival Monday and Tuesday. Such sound systems also dominate during the Labor Day Parade on Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn, and smaller versions are used to provide the music of the Kiddies Carnival. However they are absent during the j’ouvert festivities from which they have been explicitly banned by the organizing JCI (Allen 2003, 263-264). Jason “Peanuts” Isaacs, a longstanding steelband player in Brooklyn who was involved in the early shaping of the Brooklyn’s J’ouvert, had the following to say about the institution of this ban:

When Burrokeets and them come and say they want to join the J’ouvert, I say look I don’t think j’ouvert is for people like Burrokeets and them, J’ouvert is for Pan and pan only, that was my agenda... I told them that we don’t want no DJ on the street ... for pan and pan only. They used to have DJs on the side

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87 Personal observation.
playing, whilst band playing... I went back to the precinct. I tell them... we
don't want no DJ set up along the route, so we get rid a that ... I feel proud to
know that I had that input...to say J'ouvert for pan and pan only. I even went
back to the precinct, and I told them that it had a group is a mud band, oil and
all kinda thing, no pan or nothing; but what they doing, they coming down
the street, hundreds of them (scary)... wildness; Ah say no that can't work,
'cause they going through bands... they running through bands. (Isaacs 2006,
interview)

This description of the process by which the ban on DJs and their sound
systems was instituted illustrates a hegemonic course of events. The steelband
players in the leadership of the establishment of the J'ouvert celebrations at the time
turned for the support of the police to implement the initial ban. Thus resorting to
coercion for its enforcement, and the absence of DJ music has now become an
accepted norm in the celebrations. It is also instructive that although complaints are
today made of the role of the police in terms of the control they exert on the
festivities; at the time of its inception the organizers of the J'ouvert relied on the
officers in the precincts to establish the control they desired. Additionally, in
Trinidad the band Burrokeets is an established J'ouvert and Carnival Monday
band, and although they have a long history of involvement as a big masquerade
band in the Eastern Parkway Parade, it is significant that the measures would be
taken to deny their participation in J'ouvert in Brooklyn. Nonetheless from my

88 Personal knowledge.
vantage point on Empire Boulevard in 2007, while the ban on DJs was in full effect, the police seemed to exercise minimal control in comparison to their efforts on the WIADCA organized Eastern Parkway Carnival parade that occurs later in the day.

In this setting J’ouvert in Brooklyn emerges as a crucible in which many traditional practices of masking, dancing, and musical performance are observed and recaptured. In J’ouvert anyone is, or can become, a reveler or a music maker. In the Brooklyn J’ouvert can be found: “ole mas”, jab molassie and devil, alongside a few bands of colorful portrayals. These are joined by a multitude of revelers who join the bands as they dance and sing to the music of the acoustic steelbands and other percussion drumming ensembles. Anyone who so desires can contribute to the overall musical experience with the sound of the many makeshift instruments that are played by revelers. And by embracing older masking, instrumentation, and musical practices alongside the more recent steel bands, the J’ouver can be seen as embodying the musical concept of cross rhythms in which different metrical units or time divisions are juxtaposed or presented simultaneously.

Assorted Drums of J’ouvert

In Fig.5.27 one sees a small steelband in which the percussive sound of clanging iron/metal dominates. This type of steel pan ensemble, although still popular today, is representative of the early period in the development of the steelband ensemble when the numbers of pan instruments were very small in comparison to the impromptu metallic objects that were beaten to heighten the
sound accompanying the merriment. The Drums of Freedom, Fig.5.22, is a group in which the sight and sound of the African drums predominate. Performance on these drums illustrates the continuity of hand drumming practices within the Afro-Caribbean communities, despite their banning. Writing about Chinese involvement in the Trinidad Carnival in the 1930s, Chang recalls:

... in the hills of John-John, Laventille, and Belmont, were the shanties and cottages of the working class whence nightly sounded the drums of Orisha and the Rada people. From these hills at carnival time the traditional mummers descended into the city – Moko Jumbies on stilts, Warrahoums speaking Amerindian tongues, Pierrot Grenade in rags, Jab Jabs with whips, Jab Molassi painted blue – moving to the beat of African drums of tambour-bamboo. (Chang 2004, 86)

These statements indicate that while drums were still ostensibly banned, they were used in the religious practice of sections of the population and made their appearance in the annual Carnival. And they are present in the Brooklyn Carnival, as they are in the Trinidad J'ouvert, alongside the steelband that has developed in more recent times.

Figures 5.25 and 5.26 show a steelband group that features a different balance of steel pans to the assortment of impromptu, makeshift percussive instruments. While both are numerous the balance is in favor of the tuned steel pans. And, this is reflective of a later (more recent) period in the development of the
steel pan as a carnival musical instrument; a period in which the growth of the skill of tuners had reached a point that a wider range of instruments could have been produced, as in the late 1950s – early 60s. And it is ironic that the melody being played by this band is “Steelban’ Clash”, the 1959 road march calypso sung by the late Lord Blakie. And supporters pull this band along, not a truck, as is the more recent practice.

These ensembles can be contrasted with those in which the steel aggregations of the most recent period are observed. The Sonatas Steel Orchestra and the band, ADLIB, are two of the biggest steelbands in Brooklyn and Queens, New York respectively (See Figures 5.28 and 5.29). They represent what the steel band has evolved into. The range of the instrumentation has widened even further, and the balance has shifted even more greatly in favor of the steel pans as against the prominence of non-tuned makeshift objects. Thus, the procession of steel percussive sounds that moves along on j’ouvert morning in Brooklyn presents a progression in which the crossing of different time periods in the development of the steel pan is seen, albeit not in its entirety. It exhibits the creation of “something from nothing” (Brown 1990), more from limited resources; how steel musical instrument of today emerged from the banning of the drum and the beating of substitutes.

In this way the musical performances within the J’ouvert celebrations can be interpreted as an annual enactment of the historical narrative of the development and growth of the steelband percussion performance ensembles. And in doing so, in
the context of the “carnival crowd,” I am of the view that it serves to reinforce
connections of the present performers/revelers with the past. It presents a
diachronic sense of tradition that serves to consolidate the bonds of the community
as a whole. Not only does the individual become an indissoluble part of the whole,
but the current celebrations become linked to that which went before.
Fig. 5.22: Drums of Freedom on Empire Boulevard, J'ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.23: Group from Dominica plays their rhythms on marching band drums, J’ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.24: Two members of the group of Dominicans play the bell and guiro

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.25: Revelers play the iron (brake drums) with a steelband, J'ouvert 2007.

(Photograph by Ken Archer 2007)
Fig. 5.26: Steelband moves along without truck. (Photograph by Ken Archer
Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.27: Rythm Masters play on Empire Boulevard, J'ouvert 2007. (Picture by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.28: Sonatas Steel Orchestra at J'ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer 2007)
Fig. 5.29: ADLIB steel orchestra at J'ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer
Brooklyn 2007)
Mas’ in J’ouvert

The mas’ bands and characters in the j’ouvert celebrations also participate in this tying of the current to the past, and present the crossing of time periods with different portrayals being presented in chorus. The visitor or participant on Empire Boulevard in Brooklyn comes upon jab molassie and devil bands and characters, “ole mas’” portrayals, and elements of Mardi Gras, all compressed into the space that is the J’ouvert. The ubiquitous jab molassie of the J’ouvert of the Carnivals of the Caribbean stamp their mark on j’ouvert celebrations in Brooklyn with both their costumed portrayal, the rhythms that have traditional accompanied them, and their dance.

In Fig. 4.4 two of these characters can be seen near naked in attire and covered in black. Most prominently visible as well are the horns and the fork as symbols of the devil. Of great significance is the foot hooked in the fork and the contrast of its color with that of the maskers. This points to the connotation of the mas’, the portrayal recognized as being historically associated with the struggle for the Emancipation from slavery. A foot is seen on the fork carried by one of the maskers. This part of the portrayal is symbolic evidence of conquest, and the slave overcoming subjugation at the hands of the slave masters. The Greenhouse band, Fig. 5.31, is one of the big jab molassie bands in Brooklyn in which many of the main organizers are Grenadians. Although this mas’ is old/traditional, there is a large
following with a quite lot of youth, who are very much involved in the j’ouvert celebrations.

In the case of the Greenhouse, the rhythms played as musical accompaniment on the drums are variations of the rhythmic pattern that has been played traditionally for the this type of mas’ portrayal. Variants of these patterns (discussed in Chapter 4) were also discerned with the group seen in Fig. 5.23 and 5.24. This group of revelers hails from the island of Dominica and is identifiable by the Dominican national flags that its members carry. The patterns are played on the cowbell:

\[\text{\includegraphics{rhythm_pattern1}}\]

and on the drums:

\[\text{\includegraphics{rhythm_pattern2}}\]

The whistles also blow part of the rhythm. In both of these examples, marching band drums are used instead of the biscuit tins as in the traditional context in Trinidad or the African drums. This fact also supports the postulation that J’ouvert exists as an
event in which different times coalesce. In this case the traditional mas’ is accompanied by traditional musical and rhythmic practice, but the ensemble includes instruments that may be considered modern in use and manufacture, marching band drums that function as substitutes for the African drums, the revelers making use of the materials at their disposal.

Alongside the Jab Molassie is offered a taste of Mardi Gras, a mas’ presentation of the Belmont Connection with music supplied by the Crossfire Steel Orchestra of Brooklyn (See Figures 5.34 to 5.37). This portrayal contrasts severely with the jab molassie bands, being made up of different sections in which the costumes present a kaleidoscope of color. The skirts and blouses worn by the women and the pants, shirts and waistcoats worn by the men are clearly well tailored in comparison to the impromptu outfits (or non-outfits) that are worn by the traditional characters such as the jab molassie. This type of masquerade represents a different aesthetic in masking that may be more closely associated with middle and upper class sections of the society historically, as against those portrayals like the jab that has been associated with the less fortunate groups.\(^8\)

Providing further contrast in mas’ and time is the “ole mas’” character, Bush Bath, Fig.5.30, which displays itself to the judges on Empire Boulevard while the Mardi Gras band is there also. This character performs a small ritual with a coal pot and burning of incense, undoubtedly alluding to the purpose for which bush baths

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\(^8\) This observation points more to origin of these types of masks and not necessarily to those who may portray them in present times. For it is not uncommon to have members of these different economic groups portray characters originally associated with another group.
are taken in the Caribbean, the cleansing of the person from evil and diseased conditions. The costuming of this character – in long full dress, broad-rimmed hat and exaggerated derriere – is in the manner of traditional Dame Loraine of Trinidad Carnival, contributing further to the counterpoint of time periods, the cross rhythms of J’ouvert. And this counterpoint is heightened further by the fact that the Mardi Gras revelers are singing “Steelban’ Clash,” composition of deceased Lord Blakie (1959), which is being played by Crossfire.

In Figures 5.32 and 5.33 a band of masqueraders dressed in camouflage colored clothing is seen. Daniel Crowley (1956) noted the following:

Bands with costumes based on military uniforms are the oldest still extant in Trinidad Carnival. As early as the marching and wheeling of an Artillery masque was considered defective. In 1859 a band called The Veterans of Sebastopol ran away from the sticks of a few Pierrots...In a later period there developed greater competition between various Artillery and Brigade bands whose costumes were derived from actual military uniforms. (Crowley 1956, 200)

Sailor bands are still found in the Trinidad Carnival. But in the aftermath of the 1970 Black Power uprising and army mutiny, military mas’, with costumes of army uniforms, and imitation weaponry, was banned by the authorities. It is still so today. Further, it is against the law to wear army fatigues and camouflage if not a member of the military, and one can be prosecuted if found in the possession of camouflage.
and other army type wear. But in Brooklyn military mas’ survives, adding to the interplay of time, as J’ouvert reveals itself as a repository in which time worn practices emerge steadfast alongside the more contemporary.

A band of Native Indians also reveled along Empire Boulevard during J’ouvert 2007 (See Fig.5.38). Like the Sesame Flyers Pow Wow of 2006, this too represents a continuation of traditional masking practice in the Caribbean, and bands of this nature are still prevalent in the Carnival of Trinidad. Crowley (1956) noted that at that time in Trinidad Carnival:

The popular bands after sailors are Indians, who in variety and fantasy set the tone for carnival. The most archaic form of Indians is usually termed Wild Indians, or as Red, Blue or Black Indians, referring to color of costume rather than skin. (Crowley 1956, 205)

This traditional masquerade makes its appearance in the carnival festivities in Brooklyn alongside the many other traditional characters, participating in connection of the past and the present, and assisting in the continuation and consolidation of time-honored masking practices in the Caribbean community in New York.
Fig. 5.30: Masquerader portrays “Bush Bath”, J’ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.31: Banner of Greenhouse of Brooklyn, portraying “Jab Jab”, J’ouvert 2007

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.32: Military portrayal, J’ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.33: Banner showing the title of the Military band's portrayal “Weapons of Mas Distruction,” the flag of Trinidad and Tobago blow in the wind. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.34: Revelers in the band “Mardi Gras” (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.35: Banner of the band “Mardi Gras”, J’ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.36: Another section of Mardi Gras, J'ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.37: Section of Mardi Gras with men playing the metal percussion instruments.

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.38: Band portrayal Native American; called Indian Mas’ in Trinidad, J’ouvert 2007 (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
The Kiddies Carnival

For generations Carriacou people have passed on to their children an aesthetic and consciousness that regard historical and cultural patterns as priceless and beautiful. Many culture-bearers here, for example, state even before asked that they belong to the "African Nation, a strong nation. (McDaniel 1985, 186)

This statement is highly relevant to the practice of the many organizations and groups in Brooklyn. And, the participation of the Sesame Flyers in the Kiddies Carnival is a fine example in this regard. As I have already noted above, the organization came into existence with the explicit aim of "passing on an aesthetic and consciousness" about Caribbean "historical and cultural patterns" to the youth of Caribbean parentage. And, a children’s mas’ band was immediately established for this purpose.

The merging of the traditional mas’ portrayal with portrayal of more recent vintage was also observable within this band’s masquerade presentation of the Sesame Flyers. While the children were adorned in the multicolored costumes that illustrated the theme of the band’s portrayal of the year, 2007, at the head of the band were Moko Jumbies\(^9\) (See Fig. 5.39) These mas’ characters have a long tradition in the history of Caribbean masking, and have been observed dating back

\(^9\) Stilt walkers.
to the 19th century, particularly in Trinidad. Therefore their presence in this children's band makes projected connections between the current mas’ portrayals and that of the past as observed in the context of J’ouvert. Additionally, these stilt walkers are known to have been derived from sacred ritual masking traditions among ethnic groups of West Africa, where they have been associated with rituals in which homage is paid to the ancestors, and are considered to be cultural survivors which point to the larger historic connections between the peoples of the Caribbean and West Africa. In this regard, Green (1998) made these observations in describing her experience with stilt walkers on the African continent:

Stilt dancers are also prominent masquerade figures in various regions of Africa. Some...are Chakaba of Senegal, Gambia, and the charming Gue Gblin of Ivory Coast...these towering masked figures ...in the late fifties and early sixties with the Guinea Ballet...were called Gods of the Sacred Forest...There are several functions of the stilt dancer in African folklore. Because of their height they act as mediators between the world of the living and the spiritual world of the ancestors, and are able to asked for special favors, such as rain to save their crops from drought...they mediate disputes among the living when all else has failed. (Green 1998, 25)

It must be observed here that the Sesame Flyers also include the Moko Jumbies in the lead sections of their adult band as well (See Fig. 5.41). These
characters were observed by Crowley (1956), and in listing them amongst rare and extinct mas’ he said:

Moko Jumby, the stilt, dancer is known throughout the West Indies as a feature of John Canoe and other Christmas and Carnival fetes. In Trinidad he is played, nearly always by men, on stilts as high as 10 or 15 feet. (Crowley 1956, 198)

In recent years, these stilt walkers have been revived in Trinidad due to the efforts of groups like the Keylemanjahro organization located in Cocorite in western Port of Spain. This group and others train youth in the art of stilt walking and, they now include quite a lot of females amongst them.\(^9\) The Moko Jumbie is one of the characters that illustrate clear linkage between aspects of Caribbean masking traditions and those of West Africa. And the youth, who are led through the annual masquerade process by their elders, eventually become acquainted with the “aesthetics and consciousness” of Caribbean masking traditions. Not only do they interact with the present-day practices, but also they are exposed to historical linkages through the presentation of characters such as the Moko Jumbies in their bands. If this process of passing on of the “aesthetic and consciousness” is successful, then the bonds of the community are further strengthened and given longevity in the lives of the young who are expected to carry on the traditions.

\(^9\) Personal observation.
Fig. 5.39: Moko Jumbies lead the Sesame Flyers Children’s band along Franklin Avenue. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.40: The banner of the Sesame Flyers Children’s band, Kiddies Carnival 2007

(Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2007)
Fig. 5.41: Moko Jumbies among other masqueraders of the Sesame Flyers adult band on Eastern Parkway 2006. (Photograph by Ken Archer Brooklyn 2006)
The case of the Sesame Flyers organization provides a concrete example of how voluntary, common-interests associations contribute to the process of consolidation of a sense of community, and assist in the strengthening of a sense of commonality as a Caribbean diasporic community. As a voluntary organization of immigrants in an urban setting, the Sesame Flyers fulfils the general objectives of such common-interests organizations, having grown into a multifaceted organization that caters for the diverse needs and interests of the community it serves. Through its provision of social, recreational, educational, and cultural programs and activities, it actively prepares the youth to be better able to participate and succeed in the environment of Brooklyn, New York and North America in general. It also enthusiastically involves these youth in the performance of cultural traditions of the Caribbean so that they develop a greater appreciation of the background from which they and their parents came. To execute its programs, the organization has built a transnational network that incorporates the services of a variety of artistes with varied skills, dancers and musicians who contribute to its multidimensional programs.

The Labor Day Carnival Parade, in which Sesame Flyers and the numerous other groups participate, may be viewed as a reinterpretation of the Nation dance in Grenada and Carriacou by virtue of the proliferation of Caribbean national flags displayed during and around the event. As well, the parade venue is a site in which differing aesthetics of different groups compete, and this is seen especially in the attitude of the throngs of youth and some of the bands to costuming. Additionally, the J’ouvert celebrations function as repository for the maintenance of the older
masking and musical practices, which is seen in the abundance of makeshift percussive instruments and the steelband, as well as in the continued display of traditional forms of masquerade. Daniel Crowley makes the following observation about this capacity of Carnival to retain old forms:

the most astonishing characteristic of Carnival is its conservatism of form in a situation designed to maximize innovation and creativity. The more it changes, the more it stays the same. The street parades, the masks, the face paint, and the elaborate costumes... (Crowley 1999, 218)

This conservatism of the Carnival permits it to be an ideal medium through which cultural performance traditions can be maintained and transmitted from older generations to younger ones. It is what allows the Children’s “Kiddies” Carnival to serve as an avenue via which aesthetic values and consciousness with regard to the Carnival and Caribbean cultural practice in general are instilled in the youth in Brooklyn, thereby bolstering their sense of community and ensuring its durability. It is this conservative nature that facilitates the Carnival in serving as a space that embraces elements of conflict as revealed in the aesthetic divide between t-shirt and costumed bands; between the youth, who populate these bands and those who don the colorful costumes in revelry on the Parkway; while maintaining historical linkages. These linkages make the development of a common sense of
“Caribbeanness,” notwithstanding the many streams, within the community in Brooklyn.
CONCLUSION

In writing this dissertation I aimed to contribute to the growing body of scholarly works that has addressed the many carnival celebrations, which have emanated from the communities of Caribbean migrants globally. These works, from different perspectives, have assessed the impact of these festivals, and various aspects of them, on the lives of Caribbean people at home in the Caribbean and abroad.

Relying primarily on the narratives of persons intimately involved in the Brooklyn Carnival, I have endeavored to show that this Carnival event in metropolitan New York aids in the consolidation of bonds among the people within the New York Caribbean community and those at home in the Caribbean. In so doing, the solidifying of a Caribbean Diaspora is facilitated. In particular, this process is served by the practice of transnationalism on the part of many of the personnel who enthusiastically participate in the production of various aspects of the Carnival.

These actors maintain concrete ties to the Caribbean islands while performing leading roles in the diverse artistic endeavors that they contribute to the Brooklyn
festival, and they actively share their knowledge and experience across the borders and waters that separate the Caribbean and New York communities. This process is by no means new, as it has been shown to exist from the earliest period of the migration of Caribbean people to New York since the turn of the 19th into the 20th century. The production of the carnival arts has been an integral part of this transnational process since those early days. It is during the more recent period of migration, over the last four decades, that the Brooklyn Carnival has emerged as an event of tremendous impact on the community of Caribbean immigrants.

The individual accounts of the transmigrants relied upon in this work have served to shed increasing light on the process of transnationalism. This study also shows that in Diaspora studies consideration must be given to the ways in which individuals and communities take measures to continue traditional practices. Further work can be done in order to gain even deeper insight into the processes by which continuity is maintained in the face of changing locations and circumstances.

The music of soca, the current carnival music of the Caribbean, significantly contributes to the realization of diasporic consolidation among Caribbean people at home and abroad. The rhythms performed in this music are linked to older practices that have featured in many of the musical styles of the Caribbean. Soca music has borrowed rhythms from some of these styles, and is rhythmically similar to others. These common rhythmic features may serve as signals that cue responses from
those familiar with the related rhythmic styles, and provide a common basis for
diasporic unity among those within Caribbean communities who revel to this music.

In addressing this argument I relied on aspects of semiotics as they relate to music,
primarily the work of Phillip Tagg, and I am of the view that this is an area in which
future research endeavors can be directed. For instance, consideration should be
given to the investigation of the concrete physical responses of individuals and
groups to the stimulus provide by the variations of rhythmic practices of these
styles of Caribbean music. Some of this work is already being pursued by Cognitive
Ethnomusicologists at The Ohio State University. This direction of research can be
extended to studies at the site of the Carnival celebrations, and may consider the
dance responses of participants to the musical stimuli, in efforts to assess the
similarities and differences in their bodily movement.

In addressing the question of the music of Carnival, I also broached the issue
of hegemony, and argued that a hegemonic process has been waged historically over
what is and is not acceptable in the performance of the carnival arts. This mirrors, in
part, the work of Edmonson (1999), in which she reveals a hegemonic struggle that
has been waged over the establishment of a Trinidad-style Carnival in Jamaica. The
history of Carnival is replete with examples of the attempts of the authorities to
impose their dictates on what should be its suitable aesthetic qualities. The varied
opinions about carnival music referenced in this work reveal that this hegemonic
process exists within the ranks of carnival musicians and practitioners. Some cling
to those traits that have long been regarded as the standard, while proponents of the new have challenged these established tenets and at the same time aligned with some longstanding practices, particularly with regard to rhythm. Further analysis of the evolving carnival music needs to be undertaken, and there is much to be gained from the solicitation of the accounts of the numerous carnival musicians; singers, instrumentalists, arrangers and producers who have shaped, and continue to shape, the music of carnival.

In addition to the musical practices, the consolidation of Caribbean diasporic bonds is facilitated by the practice of masking and portrayal seen in the street parades, the West Indian American Day Carnival Parade on Eastern Parkway, the Children’s Carnival, and the J’ouvert celebrations. In varying ways these events provide environments in which the bonding of the immigrant community is encouraged. The organizers of the events make deliberate efforts to foster the involvement of various sectors of the community, with the participation of numerous groups from the many island states of the Caribbean. Thus, they reenact a “nation dance”, a parade of nations proliferated with the Caribbean national flags. Additionally, the J’ouvert promotes the persistence of traditional forms of masking, music, and display, thereby contributing a sense of continued historicity that aids in the strengthening of the experience of Caribbeanness.

Most important to all these facets of the realization of a Caribbean Diaspora is the role of organizations. The Sesame Flyers, used as an example in this work, is
one of many organizations involved in the productions of the Brooklyn Carnival and the Caribbean community in general. As such this is an area that is ripe for continued research. Some of this work have already been undertaken, for instance Basch (2001) has looked at aspects of the organizations among the immigrants from Grenada, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. But, there remains much work to be done in this regard. There are the large Jamaican and Haitian communities that have been long established in the New York metropolitan area, and they make increasingly significant contributions to the annual Carnival festivities. As well, while this work focused largely on the African-derived input into the Carnival celebrations, there exists a growing Indo-Caribbean community with immigrants primarily from Trinidad and mainland Guyana. There are significant sections of Queens, New York in which the demographic composition is markedly Indo-Caribbean. The visibility of this group is also evident in the many Trinidad Caribbean restaurants available in Brooklyn in which Indo-Trinidadian cuisine can be accessed. Additionally, this group has actively participated in the Brooklyn and surrounding festivities. I have mentioned the participation of the band JMC Trivini in the East Orange Carnival in the past, and there exists a Soca/Chutney performance venue in Queens. This community therefore represents fertile ground for continued research into the question of a Caribbean Diaspora, and how it is impacted by the Indo-Caribbean presence.

Another area that merits further attention is the continued import and role of women in the organization of the festival and the community in general. While this
dissertation has not made this a main focus, it has noted the tremendous contribution made by women from the initial period of West Indian migration to New York to the present time. The festival was initiated to the New York metropolis under the leadership of a woman, Jesse Waddell, and today Yolanda Lezama-Clarke is the leader of the WIADCA, the organizers of the Eastern Parkway parade and Children's Carnival. Additionally there is a woman, Yvette Rennie, who has been at the forefront of the activities of J’ouvert City International, the organization that oversees the running of the annual j’ouvert celebrations. There are also women such as Janet Cummings and others who perform leading roles in the Sesame Flyers organization, as well as Glenda Forde-Gamory who has served as President of the Pantonic Steel Orchestra in Brooklyn. Narrative projects can be pursued to document the life, work, and role of these women who make significant contributions to the carnival arts and community life in Brooklyn, New York. Such an endeavor can also be expanded as women often constitute the bulk of the masqueraders in the carnival bands, and they accompany the children along the route of the Kiddies’ Carnival, encouraging them and playing a big part in the transmission of traditional practices.
GLOSSARY

**Band**  This a group of performers. In the context of Carnival it may be a group of masqueraders as in a mas’ band; a group of musicians as in a soca band; or a groups of steelpan players as in a steelband.

**Bèlè**  a genre of Caribbean dance developed from adaptation and variation of the French quadrille and minuet by enslaves African in the Caribbean. There are many variants as it is found in many Caribbean islands, especially those once colonized by the French, including Martinique and Guadeloupe. One of the Big Drum dances, it was performed at wakes and social occasions, and accompanied by had drumming and singing.

**Cadence**  A style of music that originated in the francophone Caribbean. It is particularly associated with the island of Dominica.

**Calypso**  A style song that developed in the context of carnival celebration in Trinidad. Over the last century it has attained a narrative structure in which the lyrical themes often focus on social and political events. There are also those that are performed to accompany merriment.

**Calypsonians**  Singers who perform calypsos.

**Canboulay**  A procession carried on by the slaves and ex-slaves in which masking was accompanied by the carrying of torches.

**Cannes brulés**  French for “burning canes”. The canbouley masquerade procession is believed to have originated from the processions in which slaves engaged as they moved to put out fires on the sugarcane plantations. It should be noted that in a 2007 lecture at delivered at the National Library in Port of Spain, Trinidad, professor of African-Caribbean languages Maureen Warner-Lewis argued that the word “canbouley” or “camboule” is not of French origin, by derives from the Congolese word “cambula”, which means parade or procession often accompanied by call-and-respose singing and percussive instruments.
**Chantwell**  The singer who led the singing that accompanied the stick-fight bands.

**Comparsa**  A Cuban groups of dancers, traditionally organized by neighborhood organizations that participates in the Carnival and street parades. The term is also applied the musical accompaniment used in the parades.

**Doption**  Rhythmic vocalizations performed by members of the Shouter and Spiritual Baptists faiths during the singing of their hymns and trumpets.

**Fancy bands**  These are masquerade bands that emphasize color and glitter in the portrayal of their themes, these themes may be of a more abstract nature than the historical and traditional themes of other bands.

**Indian mas’** Masquerade that portrays Native American tribes

**Jab Jab**  The name commonly used to refer to the jab molassie, but it is also the name of a distinct masquerade character that is fully clothed in a multicolored jump suit-like costume that resembles that of the Gelede mask of West Africa. The jab jab carry whips and performs duals in which they whip each other.

**Jab Jab beat**  This is percussive rhythmic accompaniment that is played for the jab molassie mas’ portrayal. It is today played on biscuit tins, but has been played by drums and tamboo bamboo bands in the past. Away from the carnival parade setting, it is still played on drums.

**Jab Molassie (molasses devil)**  The mask portrayal in which the body of the masker is covered in black. Originally molasses used to produce this black coloration, can be substituted with body paint, grease, and even vehicular oil. Traditionally costume consists of a skimpy cutoff shorts to which a wiry tail is attached, horns on the head and a fork. Has spawned variants that are colored red, blue, white, brown etc.

**Jam bolassie**  same as Jab molassie

**Jammette**  From French diametre, meaning the lowly in society. Is used particularly in reference to women of ill repute. In relation to the masquerade of the 1800s it was used to describe portrayals and behavior associated with the lower classes.

**J’ouvert/jouvay**  An early morning procession of mas’ held at the commencement of the Carnival.

**Kiddies Carnival**  Carnival procession and competition organized for the children. It is usually staged on a day or days preceding the main carnival parade days.

**Limbo**  Dance that is performed in the context of carnival, particularly in competitions held at carnival time. This dance was originally performed during wakes held in honor of the deceased. In requires that participant move horizontally
under a bar that is placed at varying heights from the ground, and is accompanied by singing and African drumming.

Mas’  A masquerade portrayal. The term is used to both individual and group portrayals presented at Carnival processions or parades.

Military mas’  Masquerade portrayal based on military units particularly the army. Military uniforms are worn and imitation military equipment displayed.

Moko Jumbie  Stilt walker that is traditionally portrayed in Carnivals of the West Indies

Ogun  Deity of iron and war in the Yoruba pantheon of Orishas.

Ole mas’  This is a type of mask portrayal in which the masquerader(s) don old clothes and perform a brief skit. They often poke fun at leading figures in the society, and carry placards and props to support the performance; individuals and/or groups perform this.

Orisa/Orisha  A deity or spiritual power in Yoruba religious practice. It is also applied to this body of religious practices and its practitioners.

Panorama  A competition held among the steelbands at Carnival. It is held in the days preceding the actual carnival street processions and bands are to perform an arrangement of a calypso/soca composition. It was started in the late 1950s in Trinidad.

Road march  the most popular song performed on the streets during the days of the carnival festivities.

Shango  Deity of thunder and lightening in the Yoruba pantheon of Orishas. In Trinidad the name is also applied to the religious practice and its practitioners.

Shakpana  Deity of illness and medicines.

Shouter Baptists  Christian religion that is considered to blend practices of Christianity and West African religious ritual, and has adherents in Trinidad and Tobago, other Caribbean islands such as St. Vincent, Grenada, Barbados. Also called Spiritual Baptists

Soca  A genre of carnival music related to calypso out of which it developed in the mid 1970s. It exists in many variants today. These include power soca, groovy soca, chutney soca, ragga soca.

Spiritual Baptists  See Shouter Baptists

Stage side  Smaller unit of a steelband that practices and performs at various function and concerts outside of the carnival competitions and parades
Steelband  An ensemble of steelpan percussion instruments, including other metal instruments such as brake drums.

Stick fighting  A combative art form in which two participants use sticks to engage each other in battle; it is usually performed in a ring called a gayelle, and is accompanied by vigorous drumming and singing

Tamboo Bamboo  A percussion ensemble in which the principal instruments consists of bamboo tubes that are cut to varying lengths, so as to create sounds of different pitch levels when struck by sticks. These ensembles arose as a substitute for African drums, which were banned by the colonial authorities in 19th century Trinidad. They are considered to the precursors of the steelbands, and are still played.

Traditional mas’  These are masquerade characters that have long been associated with the Carnival in the Trinidad and Caribbean in general

Trumpets  Songs of the Shouter and Spiritual Baptists faith. They are performed at either a very slow dirge-like tempo or most often at a quick tempo, and are accompanied by hand clapping and rhythmic vocalizations called doption.

Yanvalou  One of the dances associated with the Rada religious rites in Haiti, and other parts of the Caribbean to which this was spread.

Zouk  A style of popular music that was developed in the francophone Caribbean islands Guadeloupe and Martinique.


[http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/small_axe/v009/9.1guilbault.html](http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/small_axe/v009/9.1guilbault.html)


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