"Time to get outta line": carnival time and the aesthetics of resistance in Trinidad and Tobago

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ABSTRACT

This article is an investigation of the fluid concept of time that characterizes carnival in Trinidad and Tobago, and that is extended to all understanding of time on the twin islands. After an introduction to Trinidad Carnival and a brief history of its evolution over time, focusing on the importance of music and performance in the resistance to colonial power and the affirmation of a national identity in Trinidad and Tobago, the article will move on to the definition of three concepts of time that are extremely relevant to the reality of the country and its carnival, and to an analysis of the importance of festivity in Trinidad. This will allow us to understand the role that time and festivity have played in the performance of carnival rituals, and in the resistance fights for the independence of carnival, and for the independence of the country itself, which highly contributed to the shaping of Trinidad and Tobago's national identity.

Keywords
Carnival, time, carnivalesque, performance, resistance

Trinidad Carnival, the carnivalesque, and carnival eras

Carnival and the carnivalesque have played and still play a crucial role in the construction of national identity in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the resistance first against slavery and later against colonialism (and neocolonialism). Trinidad Carnival is, in fact, a performative syncretic ritual of cultural resistance and awakening, claiming space and celebrating freedom from any kind of slavery, and the struggle to defend carnival and its rituals is closely connected to the resistance fights for the independence of Trinidad and Tobago from colonial and neocolonial powers.

Western-centered research on carnival has mainly been based on Mikhail Bakthin's definitions of the carnivalesque and of carnival, as celebrating a "temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and the established order" through "the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms, and prohibitions" (Bakhtin 1984, 10), thus creating a "second-world" (11), parallel to the real world. However, this definition by Bakhtin, which applies very well to European forms of carnival, has little or nothing to do with Trinidad Carnival. As Richard Schechner writes,

> Bakhtin's notions of carnival are founded on a settled, stratified society – a non-democratic society. In such a setting, authority can be suspended or set aside temporarily, and "the people" given a chance to act out their desires freely if temporarily. [...] Bakhtin's model of carnival was developed in terms of the medieval European practices as Bakhtin reconfigured them while living in the dangerous, totalitarian world of Stalinism. Bakhtin stressed Carnival's rebelliousness as he explained how carni-revellers act out their hatred for official culture. Trinidad Carnival developed under very different historical circumstances. Trinidad Carnival emerged in the nineteenth century from the celebrations of liberated African slaves embodying African ways and values and the carnival traditions of Catholic Europe as carried to the Caribbean perhaps by Spanish and certainly by French planters-slave owners. (2004, 3-4)

This is why we have to "debakhtinise carnival" (Sofo 2015, 163) in order to understand Trinidad's carnivalesque, which is not a literary trend as suggested by Bakhtin's studies on Rabelais, but the claiming of physical and cultural space,[1] a "ritual of power and rebellion" (Liverpool 2001), as the scholar and calypsonian Hollis "Chalkdust" Liverpool titles his study. Instead of a temporary escape from the norm, Trinidad has found in carnival ways of challenging the colonial power and creating spaces for subversion and actual cultural freedom and political independence.

The first thing we have to highlight is that, despite its name, Trinidad Carnival is far from being merely a copy of European Carnival. It is rather a syncretic ritual which involves aspects of all the rituals that have contributed to shaping it, and especially: the European carnival imported by European (mainly French) planters; African Masquerade,[2] a ritual involving the use of masks, which is "not a mere secular parade of masks but a sacred procession of maskers, musicians and participating audiences" (Liverpool 2001, 58); and Canboulay (from the French *cannes brûlées*), a ritual reenactment of resistance, closely related to emancipation.[3]

Carnival in Trinidad initially took the characteristics of the European Carnival celebrated by the European colonizers since 1783, when French planters started to arrive on the island thanks to the *Cedula de población*,[4] emitted by the Spanish. It took the form that is now known as 'pretty mas', made of sumptuous shining costumes. We know that the planters also wore the costumes known as *mulâtresse* and *nègre jardin* (the mulatto girl and the Black worker of the plantations), and danced traditional African and Afro-Caribbean dances, such as the *belair*, the *bamboula*, the *ghouba*, and the *kalinda*. Though they were born out of a spirit of mockery rather than out of respect, these costumes and these dances were thus the first examples of mimicry by the colonizers of the culture of the colonized.

At the same time, other rituals were celebrated on the island, including forms related to the African masquerade. While, according to Bakhtin, in carnival, "the mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries" (1984, 39), Trinidad Carnival has inherited from the African Masquerade a direct relationship between the identity of the masquerader, and the mask he or she is wearing. Instead of masking, Trinidad Carnival "unmasks," as Foote confirms: "Carnival tells the world who we are, what we think about

ourselves and where we are going. […] At Carnival time, we wear masks in order to unmask issues, selves and others" (Foote 2005, 73).

We also have evidence of the fact that "the Africans, beginning from 1834, celebrated the end of their enslavement by applying the Carnival traditions and rituals to their victory celebrations" (Liverpool 2001, 127), in particular through Canboulay rituals. This is why the 1830s are usually indicated as the era when carnival started to take on an entirely different meaning and form in Trinidad, becoming the space for the celebration of emancipation and for a constant resistance fight against the colonial power and the continuation of slavery under new names. The following era, from the 1860s on, is usually defined as the era of 'Jamette Carnival'. The term *jamette* derives from the French *diametre* (diameter), and it designates people who lived under the line of respectability, that is to say, the underclass, including "the singers, drummers, dancers, stickmen, prostitutes, pimps and 'bad johns' in general," who "reversed the canons of respectability, the norms of the superstructure" (Brereton 2004, 54). In this era, as Brereton writes, "the festival was almost entirely taken over by the jamettes, who had created in the backyards of Port of Spain their own subculture" (2004, 54), and who were organized in steelbands, "the direct descendants of the kalinda bands the British had been trying to destroy for sixty years," which were "perceived as lower-class gangs, not as musical ensembles" (Brown 1990, 92).

This is certainly the era in which carnival was closer to the European conception of this festival as an inversion of the moral code, while the most significant era for its transformation into a ritual of cultural resistance and awakening that contributed to the cultural and political independence of Trinidad and Tobago is certainly the era of the Canboulay Riots in the 1880s.

The Canboulay Riots: the time and tempo of freedom

As I stated above, the freedom conquered during Trinidad Carnival is not a temporary freedom, like the one celebrated in European forms of carnival, but rather a constant process of reconquering time and space, which has brought carnival rituals to become fundamental in the fight for freedom and independence. The best example of this is certainly the Canboulay Riots of 1881, which have to do with 'tempo' more than they have to do with time since music and dance played a role in the actual fights to defend carnival.

According to Bridget Brereton, "between 1879 and 1884 a determined effort was made by the authorities to purge all features which they considered objectionable, by force if necessary," and "canboulay became illegal" (Brereton 2004, 53). This was due to a choice by the new Inspector-Commandant of Police, Captain Baker, who decided to put carnival under control, and to do so, one of his strongest decisions was to suppress Canboulay in 1880, when "he called on the marchers to surrender their torches, staves, and drums; probably taken by surprise, for the move had not been publicly announced, they did so without resistance"

(Brereton 1979, 171). One year later, however, in 1881, "the historic Canboulay riot in Port-of-Spain […] matched the redoubtable Captain Baker of the police force with some of the best stickfighters in the land" (Hill 1997, 21). The people fought against the colonial police through Canboulay and Kalinda, a stickfighting and dancing ritual connected to Canboulay, as a woman who had witnessed the event told musician Lennox Pierre in 1954:

> When 12 midnight struck that year, 1881, the canboulay revellers moved out from Medical Corner, and the band moved in darkness and without drums. […] There was an old patois woman at the front of the band. And she called out "Mssrs, Captain Baker et tout l'homme," (and all his men) "au cour de la rue" (at the corner of the street), just about where All Star [steel orchestra] have their headquarters now. And at that signal the fellow light their torches and start up the drums and went for Baker. […] The canboulay revelers swept the ground with the police. (Pierre in Elder 1998, 41)

The British colonial police were swept away not by an opposing military force but by a performing army of people that moved as one single body since we know that "each stickman had a flambeau in his left hand, and that left hand was interlaced with the right hand of the man next to him" (Pierre in Elder 1998, 41). Kalinda is not only a stickfight, but also a dance, accompanied by the music of African drums, and by the singing of the chantwell. It is then to the tempo of this Caribbean performative ritual that Trinidadians fought against the banning of Canboulay, as well as against the wider restrictions imposed on carnival and, through carnival, on the emancipated populations of Trinidad.

Over time, the colonial police tried to ban other key elements of carnival, and in particular, African drums. The solutions found to the banning of drums were the instruments known as 'tamboo bamboo' and 'bottle and spoon'. The first consisted of a bamboo cane beaten on the ground, whose tone depended on the length of the cane, something which allowed the formation of 'tamboo bamboo bands', while the second was simply a glass bottle filled with water at different levels and played with a metal spoon, once again producing different tones. When 'tamboo bamboo' was also banned, people started to use cement drums, coming from the construction sites of Port of Spain's harbor, and oil drums, coming from the American bases in Trinidad. These were the first step towards the creation of the only non-electronic instrument invented in the twentieth century, the steelpan, now proclaimed national instrument of Trinidad and Tobago, and a symbol of how "African forms of expression, love of the word and the inventive use of music, masking, dance, possession and ritual survived in the Caribbean despite attempts on the part of colonial authorities to eradicate them" (Savory 1995, 238).

The Canboulay Riots, as well as the following struggles against the banning of musical instruments related to the carnival, indicate that music was never simply an accompaniment but rather the driving force of this fight for the independence of carnival and of Trinidad and Tobago as a nation (see Sofo 2013). Defending their right to music and to performance and fighting (through a performative dancing ritual like Kalinda) to defend Canboulay, Trinidadians

were showing that they were ready to fight and die for carnival and its freedom. They were showing that Trinidad Carnival was not just a festival like any other, an occasion for entertainment and temporary freedom, but rather the keystone of the formation of a new syncretic culture and of a new national identity, in which performance and festivity play a key role.

Trinidad, carnival and festivity

Trinidad is a festive country. A country where everything is celebrated in a kind of continuous ritual festival, which takes different forms while retaining some basic aspects. This festivity entails an appropriation of time and a rebellion against a stable understanding of time in favor of a temporality which adapts to the movements of nature, of festivals, and of people's daily occupations rather than dictating them. To discuss carnival in Trinidad, we need to discuss the "carnivalesque" aspect of Trinidad culture, which is not limited to the carnival itself but derives from all the festivals that represent the different ethnicities contributing to the fragmented identity of Trinidad and Tobago.

The reason Trinidad is considered a festive country is that celebrations in the country literally mark the rhythm of time and the seasons: Divali, Christmas, Carnival, and so on. In a tropical island, the weather dictates two seasons only, the rainy season and the dry season, instead of spring, winter, summer, and fall. But seasons in Trinidad have much more to do with festivals, rituals, and celebrations than they have to do with rain or lack of it. Divali season, the period leading to the celebration of the Indian goddess of lights, is followed by the Christmas season, followed in turn by the Carnival season, and all of them are characterized by different soundscapes. Each season beats to a different rhythm, with the music played on the radio changing quite drastically from one season to the other. During Divali season, one can hear a lot of chutney (and chutney-soca) music, "a contemporary Indian-Caribbean musical genre which displays influences from diverse sources" (Ramnarine 1996, 133), from the day after Divali, parang the music of Venezuelan origin that celebrates the nativity, takes over. From the day after Christmas, *parang* entirely disappears and is replaced, until Ash Wednesday, by the genres related to carnival: calypso – the deeply political traditional genre connected to Trinidad Carnival, defined by Louis Regis as "our national song" (1999, XI) and by Liverpool as "the music of the enslaved, free and freed on Carnival Day" (2001, 73)[5] – and soca, the evolution of calypso into a faster and more joyous genre (musically influenced by other Caribbean genres such as Jamaican reggae and dancehall, and the French Caribbean zouk), focusing on the celebration of carnival rather than on politics. The same can be said about food: during Divali, Indian sweets can be found everywhere in the streets of the country, and not just in the areas with a large percentage of people of Indian heritage, to be replaced by Christmas specialities the day after Divali, and so on. These seasons also mark people's daily lives because each

season needs different products, and several people switch jobs from one season to the other. Mas camps, the headquarters of carnival bands where carnival costumes are produced, are, for example, entirely empty until October or November, and they start working full-time only right at the end of the Christmas season.

However, as Schechner writes, “Trinidad Carnival dominates the national consciousness and occupies the time, work, and imagination of many people for much of the year. Next year’s carnival begins the day after this year’s ends” (Schechner 2004, 5-6). Carnival is in fact the ‘center’, the ‘core’ of Trinidad’s multifaceted prism of the carnivalesque. As Pat Bishop told me in an interview:

> Every culture has come here with some aspect of the carnivalesque. The celebrations of Arima and Santa Rosa de Lima, the Catholic carnival, the Amerindian rites. All these celebrations played a role in building what we now call Trinidad Carnival. The reason our carnival is still alive, the reason it has become so important, lies in the fact that this is a festive country. We are full of celebrations. We have divinities, we have Christmas with the parang season, we have many festivals and celebrations that have somehow contributed to the carnival. All of our festivals become part of the carnival. Each festival nourishes the other and vice versa. Carnival is the central one, and this is also due to the fact that it is not too closely related to any religion or ethnicity, but the real reason it has survived is all the other carnivalesque events that surround it. Without them, the carnival might as well not have survived. (Bishop 2008)

It is fundamental to stress that in using the term ‘festivity’, we are not referring to mindlessness or carefree entertainment but rather to a festive approach to life and everyday reality, which is also applied to very serious matters. Surely, the best example of how such a festive approach has been applied in the political context is the history of the short-lived coup by the Jamaat Al Muslimeen group, led by Yasin Abu Bakr in July 1990 (see Collihan and Danopoulos 1993). The group put a bomb in the central police station and took control of TTT and Trinidad and Tobago Television before entering Parliament and taking military control of the nation. However, Abu Bakr made rather odd choices for a coup leader: first, he called free elections to be held ninety days after the coup to see if the government still had the confidence of the people or not, as he believed. And then, on the state television he had taken control of, instead of airing propaganda videos, he showed calypso videos, with voices contesting the previous government, revealing once again the active role of music in the political sphere of Trinidad.

Raoul Pantin, one of the journalists held hostage during the coup, describes a very eloquent scene from the third day of the coup:

> There was Bakr, using the mouth of an AK-47 rile as a microphone, singing along with a popular calypso playing on the radio. It was the old legendary calypsonian, Sniper, crooning, “Trinidad is my land and to love it I’m proud and glad.” It was titled “Portrait of Trinidad,” a sweet, sentimental song about a man’s love for his island. And it was being played on Radio 610 that morning as part of a whole series of patriotic songs that had filled the airwaves – along with many prayers since late on Friday night. […] Two or three other gunmen had joined in, one of them using his rifle butt as a drum, and the other strumming an imaginary guitar on his AK-47. […] There they were, […] the ringleaders of the Trinidad coup, singing along to their hearts’ content, patriots to the last! (Pantin 2007, 53)

The group was expecting wide support from the people, but that did not happen, and the reaction of many people in Trinidad in the days following the coup was a further demonstration of the importance of festivity in Trinidad:

> Within hours of implementing their plan, however, it became clear that as angry and as hurt as Trinbagonians were, they had little taste for seizing power by the gun. As days turned into nights, the siege began to take on the shape of a spectacle with the viewing audience looking on from the safety of their homes. There was no doubt about the fear, but in the Trinidadian way of coping through laughter, a defining element of the national response came to be the curfew parties that helped to ease the pressure of stress. (Daily Express 2022)

When the curfew was triggered, people in Trinidad started to engage in what has since then been known as 'curfew parties'. These parties began precisely at six o'clock in the afternoon (the beginning of the twelve-hour curfew), in a place where people would meet and from which, of course, they could not leave until six o'clock the next morning, spending twelve hours together, celebrating, until the coup ended (emblematically) on August 1: Emancipation Day.[6] Abu Bakr thought the people would fill the streets to protest against the government and support his coup, but the people instead filled homes in order to protect themselves from the violence and to profit from the 'time out of time' moment offered by the coup. Obviously, the coup became itself the subject of many calypso and soca songs, such as "Calypso Coup" by Bally, "Attack with Full Force" by The Watchman, "Get on Radical" by the Mighty Duke, "La Trinity" by Denyse, and "Get Something and Wave" by Superblue; and, as Kevin Birth wrote, "the coup became comedy […]. It also became an instance in which freedom, youth, and humor triumphed over restriction, age, and authority through the performance of calypsonians" (1994, 175).

In hard times, as in good times, festivity is not just the symptom of a mindless hedonism but a nationwide cultural approach that participates in the construction of national and cultural identity and a way to face reality and act upon it rather than escape from it. Festivity and rebellion in Trinidad seem to go hand in hand.

Carnival time, Trini time, liming: rebelling to the clock

The festive approach of carnival is also related to the understanding of time and its linearity in Trinidad. Three concepts of time, in particular, have to be defined, as they are directly related to festivity and/or carnival: Carnival Time, Trini Time, and Lime (or liming). What these concepts share is an erratic and mutable understanding of time. A certain fluidity in the understanding of time is characteristic of the whole Caribbean region: Trinidad's 'just now', an idiomatic formula referring to time, to indicate when something will take place – and which extends from something happening in the span of a few minutes to something happening in a few hours, and even in a few days, but also including the possibility that it will actually never

happen – is very close to Jamaica's 'soon come', which has a very similar meaning. Punctuality is regulated by the rhythms of the body and of the mind more than by the clock, which obviously means that everyone has their own understanding of time and that everyone's understanding of time can vary depending on the day or the moment of the day, because "this festive sense of time resists the rational assumption that time marches along a never-varying path" (Riggio 2004, 22).

However, it is fundamental to understand that the concept of Trini Time, which is the rhythm of the carnival itself, does not apply to life in Trinidad only during the two days of the carnival but all year round. Instead of being a 'time out of time', Carnival is here the master of time, as Riggio confirms:

> What is called "Trini Time" […] is the defining feature of ordinary "time" […]. A concept of time more fluid and organic but no less "real" than that measured by the regularity of a clock. Trini Time – carnival time – is in itself a concept of time, with its own value, not the absence of time or suspension of time, but another way of measuring time – the time scheme if you will, of carnival's world elsewhere. As such, it is "measured," if at all, not by the clock but by the sun and the moon, the tides, the seasons in a culture that still marks the seasons in festival terms, moving from one festival to another. […] From this point of view time varies with human perception, rather than being controlled by the merciless regularity of the clock. (Riggio 2004, 22)

Once again, festivity is key to an understanding of time, as well as of forms of cultural resistance – to the colonial forces, to their power, to the instruments by which they control space and time.

There is also another term that is crucial in order to grasp the understanding of the time of Trinidad, and that is the noun and verb '(to) lime'. This term, whose origins have never been entirely clarified, is used to describe any kind of relaxed in-person social interaction, from spending time with friends to hanging out and socializing, but also just sitting somewhere and looking at the scenery or doing nothing at all. 'Liming' is not simply done to fill the gaps between one occupation and the other but characterizes a form of social interaction that is not dictated by the need to do activities together in order to spend time together.

What is important to stress here is that we should not treat this understanding of time as a merely anecdotic feature of Caribbean culture, but we should rather try to grasp the deep value of this fluidity of time, which has deeper bases and quite significant consequences. In fact, as Riggio writes,

> Trini time, which disregards the clock, is antithetical to "production" in the modern industrial sense of the term. […] [C]arnival recalls the cyclical rhythms of the seasons not as an echo of a lost way of life but as a reminder amidst the bustle of modernity that there is a present cosmic temporality that supersedes the manufactured time scheme of the factory world. It is again a way of affirming within the urban context an alternative rhythm of life. (Riggio 2004, 23)

Trinidad Carnival's resistance to a clock-driven, never-changing understanding of time in favor of a fluid understanding of time dictated by festivity, seasons, and individual perceptions is also and perhaps mainly, after all, a form of resistance to the imperative of 'production' generated by the Industrial Revolution and capitalism, which is closely connected to colonialism and imperialism.

One of the most baffling things for tourists who attend Trinidad Carnival for the first time is to find that most activities that are not directly related to the functioning of the carnival are shut down on Carnival Monday and Tuesday. Instead of profiting from the two days of the year in which the country is invaded by tourists, pretty much all shops, bars, and even supermarkets are closed. The 'No Wuk for Carnival' mantra of Lord Kitchener's famous calypso still stands in the midst of the era of ultracapitalism:

I want to spread the news loud and clear
Spread it for all employers to hear
Tell them when it comes to Carnival time
Work to a Trini is a big crime
All before Carnival, we go work
Sunday to Sunday right round the clock
But Carnival Saturday is my last
Then we want the freedom to play our mas […]
Don't ask me to work for Carnival
I'm working Ash Wednesday
I'm working Good Friday
I'm working Christmas Day
I'm working New Year's Day
But from J'ouvert morning two o'clock
Don't ask me to work for Carnival.

(Lord Kitchener 1994)

Once again, it is fundamental to stress that this concept of time is not at all limited to carnival. If, according to scholars such as Bakhtin and Turner, the carnival takes 'time out of time', "suspending what is regarded as 'normal' time […] to temporarily release its revelers from all that *really* matters in the world" (Riggio 2004, 15), the reality of Trinidad's carnival is entirely different, as carnival time simply is the driving mechanism of time in the islands.

Conclusions

Carnival is the driving force of Trinidad and Tobago's time and space, as demonstrated by the fact that the appropriation of both time and space by the former enslaved people of Trinidad and Tobago is directly related to carnival since it mostly happened during carnival, and especially for carnival. We have seen how performative rituals, such as Kalinda, were used in the resistance against the attempts of the colonial police to ban carnival, its connected rituals (Canboulay), or musical instruments (African drums and the tamboo bamboo). Fighting against

these restrictions through music, dance, and carnival rituals also meant resisting the colonial (and neocolonial) power and assigning a new role to carnival as one of the pillars upon which the national identity of Trinidad and Tobago was built. The festive approach of Trinidadian culture is also closely connected to the fluid understanding of time expressed by the concepts of Trini time, Carnival Time, and liming, which have their roots in carnival and its celebration because "Carnival does not stop the clock so much as it affirms this fluid and organic, seasonal, festive notion of time" (Riggio 2004, 24). This notion of time, which lasts way beyond Carnival Season, extending to the whole year, inevitably posits a threat not only to the colonial system but especially to the system of capitalism, so intricately connected to colonialism.

Perhaps we should read in two different but complementary ways the line of Superblue and Machel Montano's Road March winning song "Soca Kingdom": "Time to get outta line!". Trinidad Carnival has shown that it is time to get out of line, to break the ancient colonial rules that still live in the forms of neocolonialism and neoimperialism, but also that time – its stretching, its fluidity, its rebellious reshaping – is precisely the instrument that can allow the breaking of those rules, in favor of a new understanding of the time and space we inhabit.

Notes

[1] As Rawle Gibbons writes: "Carnival shifts what may be peripheral to the centre. At the aesthetic level, its impulse is to 'fill the space'; instinctively inclusive, it achieves this in several ways, from the enlarging of self in costume to the prancing and swaying, jumping up and rolling on the ground that claims the horizontal and vertical dimensions of space. Through performance, mas and mass (the movement of crowds) claim the streets, asserting the freedom so intrinsic to Carnival" (Gibbons 1999, 152).

[2] The name by which carnival is referred to in Trinidad, *mas*, derives directly from Masquerade.

[3] When a fire started in a sugarcane plantation, the enslaved people of the surrounding properties were promptly assembled through the sound of horns and shells and directed to the fields in danger, accompanied by overseers who yelled at them and who were always ready to whip them. Liverpool tells us that "the Africans used to deliberately set fires to the canes (a form of collective active resistance), and their Cannes Brulees [sic] ritual was one whereby they reenacted and laughed at the losses of their masters" (Liverpool 2001, 161). As Elder writes, Canboulay can thus be read as: "1) a Black resistance ceremony, 2) a recreational pageantry of African, 3) an anti-Catholic celebration of freedom from slavery and the origin of the present Carnival, and 4) a popular street theatre exhibiting African-style dance, theatre, and music," and "it can also be regarded as a boast – nonmoralistic exhibitionism – a duel between the European moral codes and the African canons of freedom, which in essence it was. […] What the Africans are projecting is their aspiration for true liberty, freedom to pursue their own goals as human beings" (Elder 1998, 38-39).

[4] With this law, the Spanish, who ruled over Trinidad at the time, assigned land to European planters coming from neighbouring islands in direct proportion to the number of slaves they would bring with them. This attracted especially French planters from the French Antilles.

[5] The origins of Calypso are not entirely clear. Gordon Rohler writes that "folk-song melodies from all over the West Indies – Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, Tobago, Jamaica, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Barbados and the Grenadines – contributed to the development of Trinidad's Calypso" (1990, 60), while others have indicated European origins for this genre, or even indigenous Caribbean origins. Despite its origins, what is certain, is that "in Trinidad, the Calypso emerged out of this complex of song and dance, social conflict and censorship which had pervaded the colonies from their inception. It is related to Black diaspora music, regardless of language, and shares with them traditional African functions of affirmation, celebration, protest, satire, praise, blame and conflict of all varieties" (Rohler 1990, 5).

[6] In 1985, Trinidad and Tobago was the first independent country in the world to declare August 1st, Emancipation Day, a national holiday commemorating the abolition of slavery through the Slavery Abolition Act of August 1st 1833, and replacing the celebration of Columbus Discovery Day, celebrated until then on July 31st.

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Songs

Bally, “Calypso Coup,” 1991.

Denyse, “La Trinity,” 1991.

Lord Kitchener, “No Wuk for Carnaval,” 1994.

Machel Montano, Superblue, “Soca Kingdom,” 2018.

Superblue, “Get Something and Wave,” 1991.

The Mighty Duke, “Get on Radical,” 1991.

The Watchman, “Attack with Full Force,” 1991.

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