

GuyFolkFest.org

Celebrating Our Cultural Heritage

Symposium 2006

[Home Page](#)
[Search](#)
[Contact Us](#)
[Home Page](#)
[About Us](#)
[Art By Guyanese](#)
[Awards 2011](#)
[Awards
Nominations](#)
[Come to My
KweKwe](#)
[Events Calendar](#)
[Family Fun Day
2011](#)
[Film Festival 2011](#)
[Performing Arts
Festival](#)
[GCA Newsletter](#)
[Guyana Folk
Magazine](#)
[GCA Supports
Artistes](#)
[Heritage Summer
Camp](#)
[Literary Hang 2011](#)
[Merchandise](#)
[Mother's Day 2011](#)
[Past Events](#)
[Press Releases](#)
[Sponsors](#)
[Storytelling Night](#)
[Symposium 2011](#)
[Tributes](#)

GUYANA FOLK FESTIVAL SYMPOSIUM 2006 Celebrating Our Caribbean Heritage Carifesta '72 Revisited

[The Program](#) | [Biographies of Participants](#)

Saturday, September 2, 2006
199 Chambers Street, New York, NY 10007
The Richard Harris Terrace of
Borough of Manhattan Community College/CUNY
Sponsored by the Friends and Supporters of the Symposium
9am to 4pm
This is a production of Guyana Cultural Association

*This Symposium is supported by the Friends of The Symposium and Commercial Advertisers
A complete listing of all Friends of the Symposium will appear in the Program for Symposium 2007*

The Mission

To organize an event that would contribute to an examination and reflection of Carifesta 1972.

Rationale

Since 2006 marks the fortieth anniversary of the granting of independence to the Republic of Guyana, South America and since in 1972, an event that was the culmination of a drive to recognize and claim a Caribbean identity was enacted, the Executive and members of Guyana Cultural Association, recognizing movements in this region towards other expressions of unity, consider a pause to reflect on Carifesta 1972 meaningful at this time.

Objective

The Guyana Cultural Association therefore, under its arm, Guyana Folk Festival, the Symposium will:

- Support the thrust of Guyana Folk Festival, 2006
- Identify members of the Guyanese community who have first hand knowledge of the implementation expression of the ideas of Carifesta 1972
- Identify and explore the several strands of the arts and of culture that formed Carifesta 1972
- Invite members of the Caribbean region to an initial discourse about Carifesta 1972.
- Invite contemporary practitioners of the Arts and culture to discuss current expression .

Click for other years:

- [Symposium 2003](#)
- [Symposium 2004](#)
- [Symposium 2005](#)
- [Symposium 2007](#)

Upcoming Events**Vendors**

- Provide a forum for continuing examination about the ideas of Carifesta
- Facilitate and encourage the collection of documents pertaining to Carifesta.
- Collaborate with members of the global Caribbean in scholarly research and preservation of the Arts and culture of the region.

The following essay is used as a string point for discourse for Symposium 2006:

SHAKE OFF SLUMBER

Disinclined to change our inherited social and political system, we refuse to devise new strategies, and those Caribbean intellectuals who advocate genuine liberation have either ended up as dead as Walter Rodney and Maurice Bishop, or as marginalized misfits. And so, stultified, by the sheer weight of the colonial relationship-- more dangerously so now in this time of our independence than before, the impulse, even, to regulate life according to our own cultural imperatives is – and i want to say dormant, but to be reasonably responsible, leh meh seh lethargic.

The newly disguised advances of dat self same colonizing intent, now known to us in its most advanced stage, as Globalization, is really capitalism unfettered. It is aimed at a total domination of the resources of the world by a collation of disparate business interests whose influence, through the workings of world financial organizations, extends to the governments of the most powerful nations of the world .And even their citizens are now feeling its effects: as evidenced by recent riots in Europe.

Any recourse that might be expected won't and can't come from political representatives fighting alone, The fight must come also from creative intellectuals working in collusion with young students and the ordinary, working poor, to resist the cultural imperialism dat's stealing the minds and souls of our youth.

A previous generation of regional intellectuals and artist, at the invitation of the Government of Guyana attempted exactly this with the strategies and initiatives arising out of the deliberations of their conference in Georgetown in 1970 in celebration of the declaration of republican status. Facilitated by the international reputation of our premier poet Martin Carter, who, briefly, was the Minister of information, the workshop was attended by most all the literary giants of the Caribbean (many of whom were resident outside of the Caribbean). It was in such a climate of regionalism that the idea of making ourselves known to each other and to the world through a festival of arts was born more than thirty years ago. Today, as far as I know, only Barbados and Guyana have implemented the provisions for regional artists to work in their territories without the need of a work permit. The Festival gave great prestige to the Government of the day, bringing it the legitimacy in the eyes of the Caribbean people that it craved, but the transformation to a culture of people in Guyana, that it begun and the impetus it gave to the development of our cultural facilities was short-lived.

Government sponsored schools of visual art and dance came into being but floundered for want of workable operational budgets, and the schools of music and drama never came into being. A small underdeveloped economy could not properly sustain them, not at least, while the priority of an unrepresentative government was the maintenance of itself in power by means which included an ever increasing spending on the military.

In 1964, the ratio of military personnel to civilian was one to two hundred and eighty four ; by 1976 it was one for every thirty seven.

Ralf Premdas – Across the Dark Waters. Warwick Uni. Caribbean Studies

This militaristic reliance didn't improve or secure the lot of the Guyanese people. Productivity plummeted, and emigration soared. Though new regimes have been installed the downward spiral continues and it must finally be recognized that culture which has been undervalued by all successive regimes is indeed the most formidable, frontline weapon in the service and defense of the people. Culture is the basis on which fundamental value judgments are made. And these can have weighty consequence for food security, trade, tourism, employment opportunities for youths, for foreign reserves, democracy and political stability. Indeed for life itself.

New regimes operating in similar fashion as those preceding them can't create change: King Henry- not the British Monarch, yuh kno'! The Grenadian born, enslaved African who crowned himself King of Haiti, wrote in 1811 in a letter to William Clarkson, the British Abolitionist, these astonishing words:

"We realize what efforts we in turn must make in order to fulfill your hope of being some day able to raise up Africa to the level of European Civilization."
King Henry of Haiti 1811

**'From Dessalines to Duvalier
 Race, Colour & National Independence in Haiti'
 by David Nichols**

This attitude can't cut it, and if you are asking yourselves what does this have to do with a discourse on a festival of art? WELL, KNOW THAT IT HAS EVERYTHING TO DO WITH US AS CULTURE WORKERS:

"ONLY THOSE SOCIETIES WHICH PRESERVE THEIR CULTURES ARE ABLE TO MOBILIZE THE MASSES TO ORGANIZE THEMSELVES AND TO STRUGGLE AGAINST FOREIGN DOMINATION"

Amilcar Cabral

While the dream of a regional festival of arts by the assembled delegates of regional artists was given birth and has been kept alive, and while it is no small achievement it must not, however, make us complacent. There is as yet, much to be done. Ask yourselves, those of you who are from territories that have hosted CARIFESTA, what value was it to your country and its artists? In Guyana, it brought home to the authorities the dire need for development of its training capacity in cultural areas and the school of dance was founded under the direction of a Haitian. The school of art followed, and among its graduates are teachers in schools in different parts of the region. And the Museum of African Art, the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology and the National Gallery have come on stream in this period, but are Guyanese any less alienated from themselves? Do we have a greater understanding of our diversity? Are we more appreciative of our customs, more knowledgeable about our traditions, more assured by a greater sense of self, more self reliant? If the answer is no, or an iffy yes, it means that these institutions aren't able to do the work expected of them as well as they should.

Why? It's a complex question. My own suspicion is that those at this point in the food chain would say resources! There is a lot of truth to that, but it's not half the story...

Culture is the basis on which value judgments are made. That Tommy Killnigger is a more desirable badge of identification with 'nowness' means something is deficient in our cultural penetration of the minds of our youth. That our food importation bill is disproportionately stacked in favour of extra regional sources means that agro industries are not developing and youths will emigrate North to find work, while others hang, uselessly on the block. The ramifications of cultural alienation are wide ranging, and its effect is always a narrowing of opportunities. In the long run democracy and political stability falls under threat. Culture is a frontline weapon in the education and defense of people.

We must be the most creative people there are, to have survived the capitalist intent, during its first phase of internationalist expansion, to erase our very humanity in its quest for riches,. Directing our efforts to our best reward is really the priority that should concern us more than any other. That's what our artists concern themselves with in their striving for excellence, and in their commitment to reflecting truths.

At the end of the day (and dat might be now) it comes down to these three imperatives:

The political will and the sense to exercise good corporate citizenry to enable us to budget with a keener understanding of the priority of this sector to our sustainable development.

The preparedness of artist and administrators to devise new, more technologically supported workable strategies for reaching the people, principally the youth, with messages of their great worth.

A collective commitment to greater self reliance, innovativeness and a healthy work ethic.

Dat's what, essentially, it comes down to. And these, as you'll see by reference to the words of our luminaries spoken more than thirty years ago, are not new ideas. If we are to make it in the new world order we'll have to take heed of these old recommendations:

The following words were spoken at the first CARIFESTA symposium by artist now dead. Fully a generation later, these sound recommendations are as yet to be justly realized in most all of the countries of the region in attendance at CARIFESTA '72. Following will be some that were spoken Thirty years later at the last CARIFESTA by those still very much alive.

"I'm sure you will agree that technology is today's most urgent acculturant and that its ownership and functions within a given society will in some degree determine the relationship of the artist to that society.

... It may be that the Third World artist will find new relationships to society, by means of technology, undreamt of, or at any rate unrealizable, in the bourgeois world. Is it conceivable, for instance, that the Third World artist could find or--- found---a new art out of the technology of the cinema?---a cinema without 'actors' that's to say, and employing entirely new visual idioms perhaps alternative to those of brush and canvas? Is it conceivable that the writer in the Third World could find---or found---a new art of public reference alternative to the novel, or the short-story, or the poem---out of the wholly unexplored technology of sound broadcasting? The possibility of such essentially collaborative arts of inherently public reference and potential for public dignity, seems very challenging. It would seem at any rate certain that in these new societies the arts will need to evolve within a framework wholly different from that which supports the art system of the bourgeois world."

**Extracts from "Art and Society" by Denis Williams A.A. Phd. (Lit.)
An address to the Literary Vision of Carifesta 72 symposium on the Role of the Artist in Society.
Published in its entirety in Kaie # 11 - Georgetown, August 1973.**

"...In the first place we must hear our brother speak. ...We must do this in several ways—eg: learning about the creative work that is going on in various parts of the Caribbean. ... The various universities should become involved in this---the UWI, The University of Guyana, the National University of Haiti, the National University of Havana and others.

...The UNESCO Conference in 1970 insisted that we should broaden the cultural content of our educational system, including co-operation between member States within the same region and in addition to these measure we should realize that education is a vital element in the

generation and dissemination of culture.”

...Our radio stations and our news-papers should assist in this populist exercise in their planning of programmes and series of special articles on our human experience in the Caeibbean, our life-styles, the generations of creolisation of all peoples who have moved or been moved into the Caribbean archipelago.”

Extracts from “We Must Hear Our Brothers Speak” by A J. Seymour
Kaie # 11 - Georgetown, August 1973.

“This growth is taking a long time. We have now as a matter of fact, marginalized ourselves more than ever. I mean, in all that has happened for thirty years or more, you have not seen one resolution coming out of these CARIFESTA conferences that would reach officialdom - that would be part of government policy. But I have complete faith that we would find the new order because we are positioned in the deeper psyche to bring the new world, because every bitch and her brother is in our blood. It will take special pointer men and pointer women, pointer men in particular, the men, the men have to begin to point in that direction. They can’t afford to be slipping in the way they do. The whole region is run by a set of men who are slipping. The official level of society as we see it: a set of men who are slipping.”

LeRoy Clarke

On the occasion of the Distinguished Artists Exhibition of CARIFESTA V111
Surimane 2003 - The Pointer Men part 2 - Brewster Interview - Caribarts Aug.
2003

“...they are willfully and spitefully trying to suppress my work because it has a kind of African motif, and a kind of African consciousness. They believe that when you promote the African consciousness you trying to dominate the Hindu consciousness. The two main political parties develop according to racial tendencies.”

Philip Moore

On the occasion of the Distinguished Artists Exhibition of CARIFESTA V111
Surimane 2003- The Pointer Men part 3- Brewster Interview - Caribarts Aug.2003

*All o’ we loosin’ out
‘cause we wont own up to weself
grab we soul
grab weself like we know weself
an’ tradition up we tradition,
an fuck the nex’ man
who laugh after we
an’ say it small
an’ slave-make
an’ fragment up
an’ dark night as Dung’ll
an’ client-tie
an’ don’t got no industry
an’ no technology.
Fuck him, yes!*

*Culture come when you back up
on you’ self*

***An' start when you' body make shadow on the land
An' you know say
That you standin' up into mirror
underneath you.***

**Last stanzas of 'I into History Now'
Andrew Salkey**

The way of mimicry and a continuing disinclination to think for ourselves; to devise our own structures is the colonial legacy we adhere to. The school of art of which I spoke as coming out of our CARIFESTA experience in Guyana, was admittedly a copy of the one its director went to in Britain. Could its foreign oriented programmes unleash the potential of our youths? Would it fit them for mirroring our concerns in ways that match, enhance and extend our sensibilities? Is the National Gallery a facilitation to the school of art, to the public? Do artists feel that they have a stake in it? What use is the African Museum? How does the museum of Archaeology and Anthropology mediate the history and traditions of our first people? Are these institutions not themselves alienated from the people? Who's at fault? I want to suggest that as artists we look close to home for the answer to that one.

My intention here is to ferment an agitation to return CARIFESTA to the artist inspired original intentions of the Georgetown conference that created it (a learning, sharing, networking creative experience), and divert it away from the farce (an endless stream of penny concert command performances) that officials have made of it. Artistic needs must direct its organization and influence its outcomes or the possibility may arise that its proponents should and could create an alternative on its fringes: one without all the flags of separation.

***While you here do snoring lie,
Open ey'd conspiracy
His time doth take.
If of life you keep a care
Shake off slumber and beware
Awake, Awake!
Tempest Act 11, Scene 1***

**Errol Ross Brewster
For the Symposium of the Guyana Folk Festival 2006**

The Symposium Committee

- Dr. Vibert Cambridge
- Dr. Aubrey Bonnett
- Dr. Juliet Emanuel

The Program

Conversations: Celebrating Our Caribbean Heritage: Carifesta '72 Revisited

9:00 am

Registration

Registration continues throughout the day

9:15

Breakfast

9:45 am

Welcome: *Guyana Cultural Association*

THE SESSIONS

All presentations include question and answer periods

Session One

Carifesta 1972 Reviewed

9:50 - 10:55 am

Roundtable: *Carifesta: The Concept; the Implementation*

Moderator: Aubrey Bonnett

Participants: Dawn Arno, Aubrey Bonnett, Calvin Brutus, Mildred Lowe

11:00 am - 12 noon:

Panel: *Is We Ting: Definitions and Samples*

Chair: Joyce Harte

Panelists

- Kamau Brathwaite: *Commentary*
- Vibert Cambridge: *Carifesta '72 and Music in Guyana*
- Dudley Charles: *Carifesta and the Continuing Art Experience*
- Peter Kempadoo: *Origins of Faith Based Beliefs in Guyana*

12:00 -12:45 pm

Lunch: **Richard Harris Terrace**

MBJ Caterers.

12:55-1:10

The Annual Symposium Address

Introduction of Frank Thomasson: Ken Corsbie

Frank Thomasson: *On Culture and the Theatre*

Session Two

Carifesta Today

1:15 - 2:05

Roundtable: *Dramatic Explorations in the Caribbean: A Conversation*

Moderator: Juliet Emanuel

Participants: Maurice Braithwaite, Frank Thomasson, Ken Corsbie, Cyril Dabydeen

2:05 - 3:15

Roundtable: *We Define Ourselves*

Moderator: Meredith Gadsby

Participants

- Ramabai Espinet: *Dougl'a Poetics and Politics: A discussion of Political and Cultural Implications.*
- Indrani Rampersad: *Bal Ramdilla: A Trinidad response to the Indian Traditional performance of Ramlila.*
- Ronald Lammy: *SOCA: Sounds of Oii.*

- Rose October-Edun: *Reflections on Contemporary Dance in the Caribbean Diaspora.*
- Esther Phillips: *WritingMyself: Poetic Representations.*
- Chezia Thompson-Cager: *Confluence of Culture: African American Contributions to Caribbean Cultural Representations.*

Discussant: Kimani Nehusi

3:20 - 4:00

Readings

- Ken Corsbie
- Cyril Dabydeen
- Ramabai Espinet
- Peter Kempadoo
- Esther Phillips
- Carmen Ann Subryan
- Chezia Thompson-Cager
- And others

Symposium ends.

GUYANA FOLK FESTIVAL STATEMENT ON USE OF COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

Guyana Folk Festival (GFF) through its parent organization, Guyana Cultural Association, NY., is a not for profit entity committed to the preservation, propagation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the people of Guyana. In furtherance of this effort and its related activities, GFF will from time to time solicit contributions from various artists reflecting the rich mosaic of Guyana. GFF is resolute in its commitment to respect the intellectual property rights of all contributors to GFF sponsored activities.

GFF will in all instances of commercial use of contributors' works seek to negotiate reasonable compensation for the contributing artists. In other instances of non-commercial use where GFF uses adapts, translates, modifies and/or distributes the contributions of artists or any parts thereof in furtherance of its goals, GFF will endeavor to ensure that such use constitutes "Fair Use" of such copyrighted material as provided for in Section 107 of Title 17 of the United States Code.

GUYANA FOLK FEST
GUYANA CULTURAL ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK
 1368 E. 89 STREET SUITE 2, BROOKLYN
 NEW YORK 11236, U.S.A.
 TEL: 718.209.5207 FAX: 718.209.6157
 WEBSITE: www.guyfolkfest.org
 E-MAIL: info@guyfolkfest.org



© Guyana Folk Fest 2003-2011
 All rights reserved.

220287

