Social Justice and Protest Music
From a Caribbean Perspective
By Seema Rampersad
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Indigenous - First People
Colonisation and Slavery
- Liberties Lost
Oral Traditions & Song
Kaiso to Calypso and Soca

Outside the Caribbean, calypso music is regarded as carefree, light-hearted, even frivolous. Yet calypso is among the most political of all musical traditions – a form that combines joyful cadences with serious and often subtle social commentary. Originating in the struggle for emancipation, the genre is characterised by its witty and imaginative treatment of themes as diverse as racism, the Cold War, and the cost of living.

Emancipation, Mardi Gras & Lick and Lock Up Done!
Calypso

- Calypso, which has been called a poor man’s newspaper in times when literacy was not widespread, traces its roots to African traditions of improvised songs of self-praise and scorn for others, brought here by enslaved peoples. It developed to become both a dance and cultural record of events at first in single tone style with implicit meanings and a spicy flavour.

- The roots of “Calypso” are diverse. Some argue it came from “kaiso” a Hausa word for “bravo”; some say the word came from the French “carrousseaux” a drinking party; or the Spanish “calliso” a tropical song; or the Carib “carieto”, meaning the same thing.
Soca Artistes

David Rudder’s ‘Calypso Music’:
"Can you hear a distant drum/
Bouncing on the laughter of a melody?" ... "It is a living vibration/
Rooted deep within my Caribbean belly/
Lyrics to make a politician cringe/
Or turn a woman's body into jelly/
It is sweet soca music, Calypso/
You coulda never refuse it, Calypso/
It make you shake like a shango now, Calypso ..."
Many Regional Artistes

- Men
  - Lord Kitchener
  - Black Stalin
  - Shadow
  - Arrow
  - Lord Relator
  - Machel Montano
  - Kes

- Female
  - Calypso Rose
  - Denyse Plummer
  - Destra
  - Alison Hinds
  - Denyse Belfon
  - Patrice
  - Angela Hunte
Chutney - Arrival of Indentured Labourers from The East
Chutney – Fusion with Afro and Regional Beats
Carnival as Cultural Identity, Resistance and Resilience

The European experience in Trinidad is a case in point: 18th-century French settlers brought the tradition of a pre-Lenten festival, in which they found it amusing to dress up and dance like their African slaves. The slaves found it even more amusing to use the confusion of carnival as an occasion for uprisings. Long after the slaves were emancipated by the British in 1838, the colonial administration continued to fight the now-Africanized carnival piece by piece—banning, at one time or another, drums, masks and dancing in the streets.

Source: https://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/up-close-at-trinidads-carnival-45542504/
Origin of Carnival – Expression and Freedom

Origin of the Carnival
12/4/2014

Just like the mix of people and cultures that shaped the island, Trinidad’s Carnival has many influences. The Spanish and English colonial powers, French planters, African slaves, Indian indentured labourers, and the many other ethnic groups that settled here have all left an indelible mark on the festival. In 1783 the French brought their culture, customs and Carnival, in the form of elaborate masquerade balls, to Trinidad along with African slaves. The period stretching between Christmas and the start of Lent was a time for feasting, fancy dress balls and celebration for both the French and British. Banned from the festivities, slaves in the barrack yards would hold their own celebrations mimicking their masters’ behaviour while incorporating rituals and folklore. Once slavery was abolished in 1838, the freed Africans took their Carnival to the streets and, as each new immigrant population entered Trinidad, a new flavour was added to the festivities. Today, our diverse culture has influenced the music, fand traditions of Carnival.
British Immigration, Windrush, Racism and Discrimination
Racism and Discrimination linked with Pride Celebration and Resistance

Kelso Cochrane is an iconic figure in British race relations. Over fifty years ago the young Antiguan was killed by a gang of white youths in Notting Hill, west London. No-one was ever convicted. He was the Stephen Lawrence of his day; a symbol of racial injustice. - Diane Abbot MP.
Race Relations

Junior Murvin has died but the story of Police and Thieves lives on

*Dotun Adebayo*

The Jamaican reggae singer, who died on Monday, bequeathed us an anthem whose indictment of policing still rings true.

When Superintendent Lenoy Logan stepped down as the highest-ranking African-Caribbean officer in the Met this summer, he entertained his retirement party guests with his rendition of Junior Murvin’s Police and Thieves. The irony was not lost on myself and others present. The tune is iconic. Even among coppers. Despite its critique of the profession.
Don’t stop de Carnival!

Police Tension and Presence

August 30, 1976: Racial tensions run high as Notting Hill Carnival ends in riots

Tensions between police and revellers escalated into violence as Bank Holiday festivities gave way to running battles in the streets of West London.
By the rivers of Babylon, where we sat down,  
And there we wept, when we remembered Zion.  
Cause the wicked carried us away in captivity  
Required from us a song.  
How can we sing King Alpha’s song in a strange land?
On the anniversary of trailblazing musician and activist Fela Kuti’s death, learn more about the Kuti family dynasty’s awesome influence on music, literature and politics: ow.ly/mnRE5OANcI

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I wish I know how it feels to be free.....
Freedom, Empowerment & Unity

- All is not always right or good but true leaders aim for Unity and Social Cohesion.
- Lyrics that are Creative Expressions and Cultural Identities in a multicultural and multi-religious society.
- Acknowledgement and Connection of other Cultures by respect, adaptation and fusion.
- Songs as cultural, societal and political revolution, rebellion and disruption.
Celebration as a Statement

Play de Devil
BFI Archived & New Clips

- British Film Institute BFI -
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nC9OoXhHtug

- Calypso Rose and Machel Montano
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQ0otZhMXTk

- Denyse Plummer – Woman is Boss
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Dgb-rndasQ
Resources

- British Library’s Windrush Stories - https://www.bl.uk/windrush
- Digital archive tunes into the forgotten songs of Indian slaves - https://news.trust.org/item/20200729135807-taopb/
- National Archives - https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/caribbeanhistory/links.htm
- NALIS - https://www.nalis.gov.tt/Resources/Subject-Guide/First-Peoples
- Part one of Trinidad Carnival Video - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OwvltoOGoEo
- Protest Music – Give Me Equality LibGuides - https://libguides.niu.edu/musicresources/ProtestMusic
- The Importance of Reggae Music in the Worldwide Cultural Universe - https://journals.openedition.org/etudescaribeennes/4740?lang=en