

CARNIVAL – the Mask in the Mas.

It was quite interesting over the last week, to read other writer's perceptions about Carnival and its effects on Trinbagonian society. These viewpoints ranged from '*Carnival is a reflection of the morality of our people, going rapidly downhill*' to '*Just a bikini mas. No originality!*' Whilst these opinions may be credible, depending on the circle of friends with whom you associate, I believe that when we can solely focus on the negativity of an event, it can pervade our lives, colour our lens and so consume us that many of our interpretations of other situations become negative.

Speaking to a well-known pastor who also had his 'take' that Carnival is '*a pornographic event for misguided revelers*', I opined that playing mas in all its forms was a necessary good to our society, which aided in the psychological well-being of our people, an opinion that threw him off-guard as he sought to understand what I meant.

Have you ever wondered why so many persons look forward to this event from all over the world, and begin to save their dollars from Ash Wednesday until the next Carnival? Why many prefer to go without things during the year and even at Christmas time just to have enough to play mas? Over the years I have narrowed it down somewhat to *the mask in the mas*, the salvation of one's sanity given the trials and stresses of everyday life. For two days, persons from all walks of life, young and old, rich and poor, don elegant or skimpy costumes and literally 'play themselves' – no-one to judge them, to ridicule about size, colour of skin, downtrodden situations.

Pent up emotions are thrown to the wind as they take off their masks of pretense. The psychological 'healing' here is evident! The necessary catharsis begins as they scream loudly and sing to the top of their voices; as they wine with abandonment in a sea of faces and camaraderie. **One...glorious...mas!** The balm to ease the pains and frustrations of domestic violence, relationship hurts, unfulfilled careers, troubled children and their families. **Drag yuh bow, Mr. Fiddler!**

Trinbagonian society cannot do without a celebration such as our Carnival. It serves as the panacea for many of the ills in our society, if only for a few moments. But as in any organization, there are persons who see this opportunity to wield their evil, personal agendas – preying upon unsuspecting revelers to satisfy their sadistic desires or to maximize and exploit for economic gain.

Every workplace has these persons – unscrupulous businessmen, bosses who sexploit their workers, persons who don attire not suitable for a place of work. When we see this, do we stop working, leave our jobs and seek refuge in camps? So let's not be hypocritical here and stand from

our self-elevated podiums when we seek to decry this glorious festival in only negative and debasing terms!

For many, when the festival is over, the mask is put back on as they make their way back into their jobs and their lives, pretending to the world that all is well. Who are we to dare to judge these persons, many of them women, who continue to make the decisions for their families, to make ends meet, to hold it all together.

Until the next Carnival. *Vive la Carnaval!*