



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL
FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM

FIELDNOTES

EVENT

MH-99-11-FN; MH-99-11-M

Accession No: ~~99-11~~

Date(s): 12/21/99

Fieldworker(s): Maggie Holtzberg and intern, Maureen Loughrin

Event: Meeting with Shirley Shillingford, president of the Caribbean American Carnival Association of Boston (CACAB)

Location: Healthy Baby/ Healthy Child, Public Health Dept., where Shillingford works as an outreach coordinator

Street: 26 Central Avenue City: Hyde Park Zip: 02136 Co: Suffolk

Phone: Daytime: ~~(617) 552-1111~~ Evening: _____ Other: _____

e-mail: _____ Website: _____

Ethnic Heritage: Jamaican Religious affiliation: Baptist

Other Possible Contacts: Carl Smith, Director of The Branch Steel Orchestra (Branches Pan Groove) ~~(617) 552-1111~~ (day job: plumber for BHA). Other groups include Pan Jammers and Metro.

Errol Philips (won 1999); T & T Social Club in Jamaica Plains 522-6127 (club)

Summary Description of Event:

Initial meeting with Shirley Shillingford to learn more about CACAB. Significant folklife traditions in the community include mas-making (costume making), calypso and soca music, steel drum bands, wining. The festival has run for 26 years.

Notes:

Shirley Shillingford was born and raised in Jamaica. Came to Montreal in 1967 for Expo World's Fair, worked at the Jamaica Pavilion, Man and His World. Later moved to Boston. Got a job as research analyst in Mayor Kevin White's office 1974. Only minority in office. When White left office, he sent Shillingford to the Dept of Public Health.

Had 2-year old daughter at the time, who is now becoming a doctor. Both daughters were raised up with Caribbean carnival.

Worked with Mrs. Katherine Kane on Boston 200. (owns Auburn Pond Restaurants).

The CARAB continues to receive some support from the Special Events of Mayor's Office for production related expenses. The White and Lynn administrations used to pay for trophies. They were very supportive of me. We asked them to fund the carnival. We benefited financially from that administration far more than we do today (with Menino admin). They used to tell us, "You'll have \$11,000 to spend. Tell us how you'll spend it. Sound, lighting, stage were in-kind contributions from the city. We used the money for advertiesments, T-shirts. Now we only get but \$8,000 for entertainment. It goes directly to the artists. (???)

Problem: we have artists we bring up from the West Indies or from New York. When they come, they want to be paid at the festival, not have to wait.

Bands such as Byron Lee and the Dragonaires from Jamaica, Sparrow King of Calypso.

Competition is held during Feb. carnival in Trinidad. Trinidadian government pays to tour them to NY. They come to Boston. We must put them up. The Caribbean restaurants feed them. Good family ties in the community. Other expenses: Why-Not-Rent

Says overall budget is approximately \$300,000. She fundraises – was the first to get sponsorships for the festival. (Western Union, Guinness, WILD AM radio, Bank Boston, Heineken). Is the executive producer of "Caribbean Focus" for BNN TV (Boston Neighborhood Network). Guinness sponsors every carnival in the nation. Shillingford is also the only female member of the association's administrative staff. Spoke about the challenge of working within such a patriarchal organization.

"Band" means costume masquerade band, e.g., Unity, Mas Women and Men, Mary Innis Social Club, Midas, T & T. This year Errol Philips won.

"Band" also means music band. Local band is Branches Steel band, directed by Carl Smith. Is 98% kids, they come from all over. Smith is a public relations officer for CACAB and is a plumber for the Boston Housing Authority during the day. Lives in Hyde Park. Rehearse Saturday afternoons. Won Steel Band Panorama in 1999.

Boston has 4-5 competing steel bands

Panorama = steel band competition

Costumes cost \$3,000. King costumes cost from \$4,000 to \$5,000. Radio station WILD Am paid for her daughter's costume last year.

New costume every year because there is a new theme. It can't look like last year's.

The judges come from Trinidad. We have to put them up. They judge the Kiddies Carnival, Steel band panorama, King & Queen of the Carnival.

We have ten different bands and ten different designers. The week following the Boston Carnival, Boston bands go to New York to compete. This year (1999) Boston cleaned up!

We pay \$2,000 to winner in one category. King \$1,500, Queen \$1,100, 2nd prize is \$900 and 3rd prize is \$700. Bands pay registration fee of \$250. Some politicians pay to be part of the parade, except the ones on our advisory board. Vendors pay \$200 for the big day.

A challenge trophy: If your band wins three years in a row, you get to keep the trophy. T & T Social Club won this year.

Shirley met with Esther Kaplan. She told Kaplan that the mayor has no respect for our community. The former admin had more empathy, helped new immigrants to hold the festival. I've written to the mayor and never received a letter back.