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## BROOKLYN

### BROOKLYN SPORTS

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## **Carib festival plans intact**

# No shift despite turmoil

By KAREN KRAMER

With Crown Heights in turmoil this past week, plans for one of the city's largest ethnic festivals moved ahead, as organizers and participants hoped the storm would lift in time to reclaim the angry streets with joy and music.

Labor Day weekend the community was to be the scene for the annual Caribbean carnival, with musical and costume events scheduled to kick off Thursday night behind the Brooklyn Museum, and the grand, colorful parade to flow along Eastern Parkway on Labor Day.

#### Weighing outcome

But as violence rocked the community after the death of a black child and critical injury of another by a car driven by a Hasidic man, parade officials, police and other city agencies were still weighing yesterday what the situation would be by the end of this week.

The parade is scheduled to begin on Eastern Parkway at Utica Ave. — a block from the scene of the accident and in the area where heavy violence and looting followed.

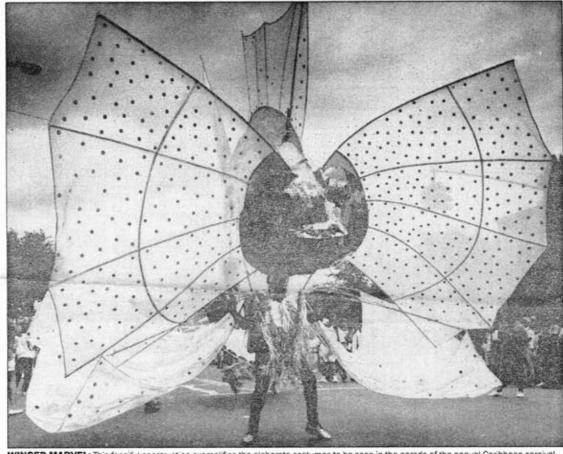
As of late last week, parade officials were proceeding with plans — pending any further problems.

#### No stop expected

"The general feeling is that this is not going to stop the festival at all," said Charles Reichenthal of the Brooklyn Arts & Culture Association, which serves as a coordinating agency for the festival. "I can't believe that anything would ever stop it."

If all does go well, hundreds of thousands of West Indian immigrants, as well as people of other nationalities, will gather on Eastern Parkway to celebrate on Labor Day.

In what has been called "the largest gathering of Caribbean people on U.S. soil," steel band music will be played, calypso music will blast from flatbed trucks, costumed masqueraders will



WINGED MARVEL: This fanciful construction exemplifies the elaborate costumes to be seen in the parade of the annual Caribbean carnival

dance down the street, and a glorious mosaic of tropical food will be sold by vendors along the way.

#### Till Monday night

The carnival is scheduled to last until 6 p.m. Monday, preceded by four nights of festivities held behind the Brooklyn Museum.

In crammed apartments, storefronts, social clubs, backyards, and basements across the borough, enormous, sculpture-like, elaborate costumes are being made for the event.

Participants spend months in preparation, working frantically until the last minute

"What I'm working on this year is beyond description," said Peter Frederick, who won a prize last year for his dancing minstrel costume. "All I can tell you is that it will be 12 feet high on top of my shoulders, which makes the entire piece 18 feet in the

air. This is one you have to come out and see for your-

"You know, sometimes we work up until 2 or 3 in the morning, night after night, said Frederick, who has been working on his costume since the beginning of the summer. "But you must do it, because this costume is you, this costume is your people, this costume is everything."

#### Varieties of music

If the costumes are at the visual heart of the carnival, then the music is its soul. Calypso, soca, reggae, Barbadian spouge and Haitian merengue, as well as American disco, will blare from buildings along the route. For weeks before the event, calypso and reggae singers from the islands have been making their annual pilgrimage to Brooklyn to perform in the many clubs of the community.

But for many, the real mu-

sic delight of the carnival is the steel band, or "pan" as it is called in the West Indies. There is a great competition among the groups to get the sweetest sounds and the most unusual arrangements, and sometimes special tuners and arrangers are flown up from the Caribbean. The competition for the best of the bands will be held Saturday night behind the Brooklyn Museum.

#### Traditional food

All along the parkway on Monday, vendors are preparing to sell traditional West Indian foods such as roti — a thin, flat, doughy bread wrapped around a meat or vegetable filling — beef patties, codfish cakes, sugar cane, coconuts and Old Oak rum. While some of the vendors are professional cooks with their own restaurants, the majority will make the food in their home kitchens.

But the carnival is more than just an expression of the great Caribbean capacity for celebration. It is a time when people who haven't seen each other all year gather to meet old friends, to strengthen the ties of the community and reaffirm the sense of cultural identity.

It is estimated that there are nearly 750,000 West Indian immigrants in New York City. They represent every Caribbean island, from the larger ones such as Trindad and Jamaica to the tiny Grenadine islands of Canouan and Carriacou.

There is hope in the community that next Monday Crown Heights will be at peace again and almost a million people will be able to eat roti, hear steel bands, jump up and experience one of the best times to be had in New York City all year.

Karen Kramer is a freelance writer.

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PAGE 3