“The Rapture is Really Coming”: On Tourism and the Creation of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival

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Introduction

In May 2013, during the 2013-2014 Budget Communication, the Right Honorable Perry Christie, Prime Minister of The Bahamas, announced his government’s intention to hold a carnival in 2015. He said that the event was to be in the style of Trinidad's carnival and New Orleans’ Mardi Gras, and that it would boost the tourism industry and thus the economy (McKenzie 2013; Adderley 2013). His announcement was met with shock and indignation from the Bahamian public, who were amazed that other nations’ traditions were chosen as the model for this plan, rather than The Bahamas’ own parade, Junkanoo.

Finances were another cause for concern, as the Prime Minister stated during his presentation that one million dollars’ of government funds were allocated for the development of this carnival (McKenzie 2013). Almost a year later, he revealed that the government would have to spend a further eight million dollars to produce the carnival (Rolle-Brown 2014a and 2014b). Junkanoo has never received this kind of funding, much less any of the other local festivals – like Cat Island Rake n’ Scrape – which makes the plan even more distressing for many Bahamians, who are upset that this exorbitant sum is being injected into a project that is not indigenous. As time wore on, the carnival began to resemble Trinidad’s Carnival more than anything else, which only raised Bahamians’ ire further. Nevertheless preparation for the inaugural Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival continued, and the event season opened on April 6, 2015.

As a Bahamian, the carnival raises several questions and concerns which I interrogate in this thesis. I ask: What does it mean to be Bahamian, more specifically, to be an individual that grows up and lives in a place where tourism is an intrinsic part of your life and shapes the way you assess your world? What does it mean to

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1 The Bahamian dollar is pegged to the US dollar, with a ratio of 1:1.
Bahamians that the consummate Trinidadian festival is the template for the country’s new, tourism-oriented one? In other words, what are the identity politics underlying this admittedly economic decision?

The strongly negative reactions to the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival are grounded in two factors: the importance of Junkanoo to the nation, and the effects of the tourism industry on Bahamian life. Junkanoo is a parade that has been an integral part of Bahamian culture since the 19th century and, as previously mentioned, enjoys considerable pride of place as one of the markers of Bahamian identity. Tourism, along with The Bahamas’ interposition between the United States and the Caribbean, and its status as a newly independent nation, ranks as one of the major influences on Bahamian society and culture.

By exploring the history of Junkanoo, the growth of the tourism industry, the details of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, and the public’s reception of its announcement and development, I demonstrate the ways Bahamian culture and the Bahamian tourism industry influence one another and impact Bahamian identity. I also show how music is caught in and contributes to these negotiations, and how The Bahamas’ geography and status as a postcolony are instrumental in this process. Ultimately, my analysis of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival further illuminates the complex, intrinsic role tourism plays in the growth of The Bahamas and other Caribbean nations, contributing to the nascent scholarship on this subject.

**Musical Terminology**

In addition to Junkanoo, I make reference to two other genres of Bahamian music. Goombay is the name both for a drum made of goatskin, and for a type of music. While it is considered one of the core elements in the Bahamian musical tradition, there is no agreed upon definition of its musical elements. Some
Bahamians I spoke to think of goombay as an umbrella term for Junkanoo and rake n’ scrape, both of which incorporate the goombay drum, while others think of it as the genre that was popular in the early to mid 20th century but has since ceased to exist (M. Thompson 2014). Yet another interpretation of goombay is that it was used to describe what is now called rake n’ scrape, but was co-opted to describe the popular music of the aforementioned period (Rommen 2011: 25). Whatever its status, the word goombay continues to have currency in the contemporary Bahamas, not only to refer to music but also to associate something – a soda, a festival – with general cultural heritage.

Rake n’ scrape is a genre of Bahamian music developed in Cat Island and Long Island, both in the southern part of the archipelago. The ensemble comprises the goombay drum, a scraped saw (originally a flask of gin), an accordion, and the voice. Unlike Junkanoo, which developed in New Providence – home to Nassau, the nation’s capital – and moved outward to other islands, rake n’ scrape moved from the periphery into the center.

It would be useful here to give a brief summary of Trinidad’s Carnival, a major national event famous throughout the region and the world. The carnival season begins on Boxing Day, December 26, and is full of the music of Trinidad: there are soca concerts, steelpan competitions, and calypso tents – places where calypso musicians perform – open to the public. Additionally, masquerade bands launch their themes and host parties – known as fêtes. Throughout the carnival season radio stations play soca music written for the parades proper, familiarizing the public with the songs before it is time to use them on the road. A prize is awarded to the musician

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Footnote:

2 In Long Island this was originally a large tambourine made with goatskin.
whose song receives the most play during the Carnival parades; this song is known as the Carnival Road March.³

The season culminates in activities spanning a five-day weekend, beginning with the International Soca Monarch competition on the Friday before Ash Wednesday. At this concert soca musicians vie for one of three prestigious titles, Power Soca Monarch, Groovy Soca Monarch, and Carib Breakout Artiste (International Soca Monarch). The following day is Panorama, the elite steelpan competition, pitting pan orchestras – ranging from 25 to 120 members – against one another (Pan Trinbago 2013: 5). On Dimanche Gras, or fat Sunday, there is a massive concert featuring soca, calypso, and steelpan musicians, as well as the Calypso Monarch competition (Dudley 2004; Green and Scher 2007).

J’ouvert⁴ is a pre-dawn party that happens on the Monday before Ash Wednesday. Participants cover themselves in chocolate, mud, oil, and paint, or dress in simple homemade costumes. Traditional carnival figures and practices – like the jab jab (devil), and men dressing as women – are also seen during this time (Mason 1998: 9; Copeland 2010: 11-12; De Freitas 2007: 49-50). Participants dance freely through the streets of Port of Spain, Trinidad's capital, in contrast to the more organized activities later that day. J’ouvert is known as the “dirty mas” (short for masquerade), in contrast to the “pretty mas” on Carnival Monday and Tuesday (Mason 1998: 9; Copeland 2010: 10). “Pretty mas” is a more expensive, elaborate form of celebration, where large bands of people parade in uniformed costumes. The leaders of masquerade bands not only develop the themes for these costumes, but also supply its paying members with food, alcohol, and even bathroom facilities to use during the parade. On Carnival Monday and Tuesday, bands march along a designated route, performing choreographed movements at particular judging points. Excitement

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³ Other Caribbean countries with carnivals – e.g. Barbados, St. Lucia – have also adopted this prize.
⁴ From the French jour ouvert, day open, or daybreak (Green and Scher 2007: 229)
reaches its peak on Carnival Tuesday, when the winning Band of the Year is announced (Mason 1998; Riggio 2004a; Copeland 2010).5

Tourism Terminology

According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO):

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes. These people are called visitors (which may be either tourists or excursionists; residents or non-residents) and tourism has to do with their activities, some of which imply tourism expenditure. (World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2015a)

The UNWTO delineates a surprising number of terms to describe the kinds of people traveling as well as their travel purposes. They identify three basic forms of tourism – domestic, inbound, and outbound6 – which can be combined to derive the following three forms – internal, national and international tourism.7 The following diagram illustrates these relationships:

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6 “Domestic tourism comprises the activities of a resident visitor within the country of reference, either as part of a domestic tourism trip or part of an outbound tourism trip.” “Inbound tourism comprises the activities of a non-resident visitor within the country of reference on an inbound tourism trip.” “Outbound tourism comprises the activities of a resident visitor outside the country of reference, either as part of an outbound tourism trip or as part of a domestic tourism trip” (World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2015a emphasis added).

7 “Internal tourism comprises domestic tourism plus inbound tourism, that is to say, the activities of resident and non-resident visitors within the country of reference as part of domestic or international tourism trips.” “National tourism comprises domestic tourism plus outbound tourism, that is to say, the activities of resident visitors within and outside the country of reference, either as part of domestic or outbound tourism trips.” “International tourism comprises inbound tourism plus outbound tourism, that is to say, the activities of resident visitors outside the country of reference, either as part of domestic or outbound tourism trips and the activities of non-resident visitors within the country of reference on inbound tourism trips” (World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2015a emphasis added).
The UNWTO further differentiates between travelers making day trips and those whose trips last for a night or longer (ibid). For the purposes of my thesis, I use “tourists” or “visitors” to describe those people who travel outside their usual home environment, or as the UNWTO would describe them, inbound tourists. I make no distinction between excursionists – or those making day trips – and tourists – those whose trips include overnight stays. My focus is on visitors that come for leisure and as such exclude those on business or professional trips.

The need for the UNWTO’s nuanced descriptions of travelers makes sense when understood in the context of tourism’s global impact. “Over the decades, tourism has experienced continued growth and deepening diversification to become one of the fastest growing economic sectors in the world,” and tourism is a “key driver for socio-economic progress” (World Tourism Organization UNWTO 2015b). Presently, the volume of business in the tourism industry around the world equals or
surpasses that of oil exports, food products, or automobiles. Tourism is one of the major players in international commerce and is also one of the main income sources for many developing countries (ibid).

As tourism became a regular phenomenon, even more specific forms of travel emerged. Industries developed to satisfy niche markets as people journeyed solely in search of things like food, wine, sports, literature, and music (Gibson and Connell 2005: 7). Thus, people working in and studying the tourism industry have contributed their own terms to the vocabulary, for example religious tourism, ecotourism, and cultural tourism.

Cultural tourism is an umbrella term used to describe travel inspired by a desire to experience people's history and traditions. It unfolded due to a number of demand and supply factors, including the following: globalization spurred an interest in culture as a means for identity formation and differentiation; people became more interested in having direct encounters with other people rather than sightseeing experiences; new technologies made information about tourism and culture more accessible; and cultural tourism was seen as a growth market and more quality form of tourism (Raj, Griffen, and Morpeth 2013: 6, fig. 1.1). Cultural tourism has a number of benefits, including diversifying the local economy, preserving historic traditions and cultural sites, and promoting community pride (ibid: 7, fig. 1.2; cf. Amico 2014). While scholars focus on the human implications of cultural tourism, which is traditionally fraught with uneven power relationships, industry players focus on “cultural tourism as a marketable and saleable ‘product’” (Raj, Griffen, and Morpeth 2013: 5).

Tourism is an important object of study because it is “a particularly powerful force for economic and social change, rife with ironies, inequalities and essentializations” (Kaul 2009: 6). It also “creates intense culture contact and cultural
disjuncture, intensifies the process of commercialization, and impacts the [host] locale’s changing social structure, economy, and expressive culture” (ibid: 7). As such, it has transformed the social and cultural life, environment, economies, politics, and music of host communities (Krüger and Trandafoiu 2014).

**Methodology**

I went home to New Providence for the summer of 2014 and spent about six weeks doing research there. My initial interest was in the Haitian and Haitian-Bahamian community, which is marginalized and often ill treated by non-Haitian Bahamians. I wondered about the music in their community, and the fact that it is almost inaudible to the general public. I was simultaneously interested in the development of the government’s carnival proposal, inspired more by the accompanying public outcry than by the event in itself. For various reasons, my attempt at learning more about the Haitian and Haitian Bahamian community was unsuccessful, and after a short while I turned my attention fully to the carnival.

I began my research at the Bahamas National Festival Commission, the body responsible for the development of the carnival plan. I met with the Chief Administrator of the Festival Commission Secretariat on two occasions, and kept in touch with her via email throughout my research and writing period with any follow-up questions I had. I also spoke with a well-known musician who sits on the Commission. Over the summer I interviewed the Director of Culture, who is head of the Department of Culture in the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture. Other interviewees included another well-known Bahamian musician and Junkanooer, a radio personality from one of the most popular radio stations for young Bahamians, and a young woman who had experienced the carnivals of Trinidad and St. Lucia, and
Barbados’ festival Crop Over. I also had many casual conversations with friends and family on the subject of the carnival.

I was incredibly fortunate that during my research the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas (NAGB) exhibited *Ace of Spades: The Father of Modern Day Junkanoo*, celebrating the life of prominent Junkanoo leader and participant Winston “Gus” Cooper, co-founder of the legendary Valley Boys Junkanoo group. In addition to focusing on the life of Cooper, this exhibition invited Bahamians to discuss their feelings on Junkanoo and as such was an opportunity for them to reflect on its role in the nation. Comments were gathered from artists and culture workers to be incorporated into the exhibition, and space was left on the walls of one of the rooms for visitors to write their own thoughts. The total experience of the exhibit – which included a recreation of a Junkanoo shack\(^8\) – resulted in a powerful narrative of Junkanoo’s place in the heart of the community, and provided me with a pulse on contemporary thoughts and feelings about the festival in a scope that I could not have even imagined gathering myself.\(^9\)

The best resources for information on the carnival proved to be internet-based. I followed news via the websites of local dailies, *The Tribune* and *The Nassau Guardian*, and mined each article for reader comments. The weekly publication *Bahamian Art & Culture*, an electronic newsletter produced by a local design firm, gave me access to the opinions of even more Bahamians, especially those in the arts community. I followed carnival-related issues on Facebook through the Festival Commission’s Bahamas Carnival page, the masquerade bands’ respective pages, and the statuses of my peers. Other websites, blogs, and electronic news resources, such as *The Bahamas Weekly*, also proved useful.

\(^8\) Junkanoo participants work together in large warehouse-like spaces to create their costumes. These buildings – which have highly restrictive entry – are known as shacks.

\(^9\) A sample of some of the comments written on the walls is included in Appendix B.
Of course, the development of the carnival continued after I left home to return to Connecticut. Thus, I persisted in monitoring all these web-based sources throughout the year. It was fascinating to be able to follow the dance between the government and the community in real time. Every week it seemed there was some new information or passionate declaration. This prompted several follow-up telephone calls to the Bahamas National Festival Commission, further engagement with my peers over Facebook, and a Skype interview with a local singer/activist. I was in contact with various government ministries and had several conversations with the chair of the Junkanoo Corporation of New Providence. Because there was constantly so much happening, it was hard to feel as though I was hearing the complete story, and even more difficult to gain a solid grasp of the perspectives of the people involved. Although this flux is true of any anthropological study, it was especially challenging in the case of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, which was unfolding and forming as I was trying to pin down its shape in my mind. Even as I was drafting my conclusion, news of changes and developments were making the daily headlines and being critiqued in opinion letters. Writing in the midst of such a dynamic process, I am sure the distance of history will help future scholars deliver a broader and/or more comprehensive perspective.

**Literature Review**

I relied on ethnomusicologists E. Clement Bethel (1978; 1991), Nina Michelle Wood (1995), Timothy Rommen (1999; 2011), and theatre anthropologist Keith Wisdom (1985) for the development of my narrative on the history and music of Junkanoo. Anthropologist Nicolette Bethel’s (2014) research and recent publication on the economics of Junkanoo was serendipitous; without her work I would have been unable to provide the comparison between the costs and benefits of Junkanoo and the
cost and predicted benefits of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival. I am eternally grateful to civil servant Angela Cleare (2007), a veteran in the Bahamian tourism industry, for writing *History of Tourism in The Bahamas: A Global Perspective*. This volume was made possible through work done over the course of her pursuit of an MBA, and I relied on it heavily to understand the development of the tourism industry in The Bahamas. To my knowledge, there is only one other text which includes similar information (Thompson 2008) but this reviews the economic history of the nation in general and is written as a point-by-point summary of events rather than a narrative.

The lack of scholarship on tourism is not unique to The Bahamas, however; academics have only recently begun to take tourism studies seriously. This is especially true in ethnomusicology, where laments over the scarcity of research became a familiar part of my reading. Ethnomusicologists that do study tourism agree that this can be traced to the fact that music aimed at tourists is often considered vulgar or inferior to ‘real’ expressive culture (LaBate 2009; Guilbault 2014). It seems the tides are shifting, however, as two anthologies on tourism were published last year. One of these, *Sun, Sea, and Sound: Music and Tourism in the Circum-Caribbean*, was particularly relevant to my research (Rommen and Neely 2014). Rommen’s introduction and Jocelyne Guilbault’s afterword helped me understand the scope and implications of tourism studies generally. In his chapter on the Festival Gwoka in Guadeloupe, Jerome Camal discusses similarities between nation building and tourism development, and the intimate connections between the issues in tourism and postcolonialism. This served as a guide for the carnival matters unfolding in The Bahamas.

Studies of tourism frequently raise a discussion of authenticity. Here too I benefitted from the work of Camal (2014), as well as that of Chris Gibson and John
Connell (2005), and anthropologist Adam Kaul (2009). These scholars all address the tension that arises between hosts seeking to provide an experience of difference to their visitors, the way this inevitably affects the form of whatever it is the visitors will experience, and thus how far they can truly have a ‘real’ encounter with their hosts. Authenticity in tourism studies goes hand in hand with concepts of agency and identity, which are also central in the literature.

Regarding agency, it is easy to consider hosts in a passive position – their music is commodified, their bodies and cultural practices are exoticized – but we are reminded that there are instances when locals make savvy decisions based on their knowledge of their visitors. For example, Jessica Anderson Turner (2010) writes about the “tourism commons,” a repertoire of material shared by ethnic minority groups in the Guangxi region of China. Turner argues that in spite of this commons, performers exercise individual entrepreneurship and agency, and negotiate social constructions of heritage, ethnicity, and place through the decisions they make about their performances for tourists. In *Sun, Sea, and Sound*, Daniel T. Neely (2014) writes about mento musicians in Jamaica incorporating genres of music from other Caribbean countries into their performances, giving me an historical perspective on this issue as well as an example of it happening in a Caribbean context. This led me to search for other work on intra-regional flows of Caribbean music, and I found Matthew J. Smith’s (2014) chapter in the same volume similarly helpful. He writes about the relationship between Haiti and Jamaica in the 1950s and the exchange of music and other gestures of cultural goodwill between the two countries.

In addition to work in ethnomusicology, I read texts from tourism studies, geography, anthropology, and on postcolonial theory. Taken together, these gave me a general understanding of the layers of meaning and relationships involved in tourism, as well as the breadth of issues in the industry. Kevin A. Griffin, Razaq Raj,
and Nigel D. Morpeth’s (2013) anthology familiarized me with the complexities of cultural tourism. I found their introduction to the anthology to be thorough and straightforward, especially with regard to the link between cultural tourism and individual, community, and national identity formation. Carlos Fernandes’ chapter in the same volume was useful in considering the impact of cultural tourism on host communities, particularly the ways hosts’ anticipate the costs and benefits of their investment in the tourism industry. Commodification came up frequently in my reading, and I found geographer Xiaobo Su’s (2011) analysis of ethnic music in China especially helpful. He argues that rather than having a unidirectional view of commodification, we should see it as embedded in a temporal process in which culture, economy, and politics synthesize to shape place making and identity building.

There are several other texts I found particularly helpful as I was considering the practical implications of the carnival: Deborah Thomas’ (2004) monograph on nationalism, globalization, and the politics of culture in Jamaica; Ruth Hellier-Tinoco’s (2011) monograph on tourism, nationalism, and performance in Mexico; and Jerry Lowell Wever’s (2011) dissertation on creolizations of music in St. Lucia. Thomas and Hellier-Tinoco’s studies broadened my understanding of the role of the government in shaping and institutionalizing culture, with respect to both identity and nationalism. Wever’s dissertation contributed to my reflection on the ways modern forces challenge meaningful decolonization and sovereignty in postcolonial nations, and therefore the degree to which power is reclaimed in these states.

**Organization and Summary of Chapters**

In the first chapter, I discuss the history of The Bahamas, with a special focus on the development of the tourism industry. The emphasis is on the business side of
the industry, although I do use my personal experiences as a Bahamian to consider its psychological impacts. I also include some information on the entertainment industry, specifically with reference to the improving position of local musicians as the tourism industry grew. I take a rather broad view, beginning with Columbus’ landing in 1492 and continuing the discussion into tourism in the present day. This sweep is necessary to understand the socio-politics of the nation, and helps to cultivate an understanding of the way tourism brought it stability and prosperity.

The second chapter is entitled “Junkanoo, Soundmark of The Bahamas,” making use of Murray Schafer’s (1997) term. A soundmark refers to an element in the soundscape that is unique to and recognizable by its community, and it is one I find fitting for Junkanoo. In this section I review the history and development of the parade and its place in contemporary Bahamian society. I also include examples of the way the music of Junkanoo has moved beyond the Christmastime parades into multiple aspects of society. This chapter also discusses the cost of the major parades to the government and the public, serving as a reference point to the cost of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival.

With these explanations established for context, I move on to discuss the newly initiated carnival. The third chapter explains its introduction to the public, the planning and programming of the Bahamas National Festival Commission – including a competition to create music for the event – the ways the carnival is predicted to financially benefit the country, and the positive reactions of the Bahamian public.

The fourth and final chapter details the public’s complaints about the carnival, which I have organized into seven categories. Music has a category to itself, which I give the most attention, discussing the songs that won the Commission’s song competition and other international artists that have been hired to perform at
carnival events. This chapter closes with a general comment on the lack of affinity between Bahamians and the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival.

In my conclusion I discuss the pressures of the tourism industry on Bahamians’ articulation of their national identity, specifically through the tension between catering to the tourism industry and being mindful of our more personal self-interests. I also discuss Bahamians’ relationship with other countries in the Caribbean, a subtle narrative running through each chapter. I look in particular at the ways we share music with one another both for our own personal enjoyment and to aid in our respective tourism industries. With such an open and deliberate relationship, I ask what separates the actions of the government from this history of mutual borrowing, and try to discern the root of Bahamians’ discomfort. This provokes a discussion on patterns of appropriation, and the relationship between culture, identity, and economy. With so many issues brought to the fore and left unresolved, I close with a reflection on the relationship between a people and their government, and between a people and the work they must do for their future.
Figure 2. Map of The Bahamas, CIA World Factbook
The Development of the Tourism Industry in The Bahamas

Oftentimes, when people (outside of the Caribbean) discover that I am from The Bahamas, they react with a combination of amazement and envy. Usually, in that first conversation, they will ask me what made me leave my home in paradise, or another similar question. Some have very strange ideas about what daily life is like for Bahamians, and this will come out when they ask how I used to get to school – on a dolphin? – the kinds of clothes I wear – grass skirts? – and what I do most days – sip margaritas in a hammock on the beach? While it is true that the islands of The Bahamas are extraordinarily beautiful and the climate is warm and sunny, Bahamians have to work and make a living just like everyone else in the world. That seems like an obvious statement, but The Bahamas government has successfully created a brand out of the country, one that is associated with serenity and absolute contentment. The reality of the nation is far more complex – as these things usually are – and tourism has long been its demanding, intimate partner.

Early Settlement

Lucayan Indians were the first recorded inhabitants of The Bahamas. Columbus and his crew were the first visitors, though their 15-day stay in October 1492 led to a disastrous end to the Lucayans. Enslaved by the Spanish, within 25 years their society of about 20,000 people was eliminated. Following this, The Bahamas were unpopulated and largely ignored for over 100 years until the Company of Eleutherian Adventurers arrived in 1647. A group of independent Puritans, they left Bermuda to gain religious and political freedom, and created the first English
settlement on Eleutheria.\textsuperscript{10} Although they had a constitution, the first proper form of government came when Charles II of England granted The Bahamas to six Lord Proprietors in 1670.\textsuperscript{11}

The Bahamas under proprietary government was a raucous, unruly place. It became a haven for pirates, privateers, and buccaneers, who used the port of Nassau on New Providence, the main settlement of the islands, as their attack base. Infamous pirates Edward “Blackbeard” Teach, Mary Read, and Ann Bonney were among the pirates who frequented Nassau. The settlement was attacked repeatedly, and on one occasion burned to the ground, encouraging many families to move to Exuma, Cat Island and Harbour Island. In 1718 the islands were put under the governorship of Captain Woodes Rogers, a former privateer. His motto for the colony, \textit{Expulsis Piratis, Restitutia Commercia} (Pirates Expelled, Commerce Restored), described his commitment to creating law and order. During his second term as Royal Governor, The Bahamas became one of the first places in the world to host a House of Assembly, with its first session beginning in 1729.

Even as the colony was finding its footing, it was recognized as a place to go for relaxation and convalescence. Peter Henry Bruce, a military engineer sent to repair the forts of Nassau in the 1740s, wrote in his journal about his visit. He noted the population was 2,303 – including enslaved men, women, and children, and inhabitants of Harbour Island and Eleuthera – and waxed eloquent about the climate:

\textit{The Bahama Islands enjoy the most serene and the most temperate air in all America, the heat of the sun being greatly allayed by refreshing breezes from the east; and the earth and air are cooled by constant dews which fall in the night. They are free from the sultry heat and little affected by frost, snow, hail, or the northwest winds, which prove so fatal both to men and plants in our other colonies. It is therefore no wonder the sick and afflicted inhabitants}

\textsuperscript{10} Now called Eleuthera.
\textsuperscript{11} I used Craton and Saunders 1992 and 1998 and Bethel 1991, combined with knowledge that I gained in school, to write the summative paragraphs in this chapter. Additional sources are noted where necessary.
of those climates fly hither for relief, being sure to find a cure here. (Cleare 2007: 37)

During this time, visitors had to stay in private homes, as communication, transportation, and accommodation were all unable to meet the needs of any hospitality industry. The colony was rather poor, and most Bahamians sustained themselves through fishing, illegal wrecking, turtling, and farming of simple crops such as guinea corn, peas, potatoes, pumpkins, and bananas (Cleare 2007: 38).

The next wave of immigrants began in 1783, after the Declaration of Independence was signed in the United States and thousands of Loyalists moved to The Bahamas. Hoping to grow cotton, they brought their slaves along with them and established plantations on various islands in the archipelago. Loyalists continued arriving until 1785. In that time the population of the country had tripled, and the number of enslaved blacks grew from half to three quarters of the total population. However, the cotton industry did not last long because of poor soil, parasites, and competing plantations form the United States, which caused a downturn in the economy.

The British Government’s 1807 abolition of the slave trade brought another population increase to the colony. The abolition included the stipulation that any slaves captured in battle were to be set free. As a result, British seamen would intercept French, Spanish, Portuguese, and American ships bound for the New World and free the Africans on board. Because of The Bahamas’ convenient location nearby major slave ports, and because of its treacherous waters, it was easy for these ships to be caught and have their African occupants released in the colony. An estimated 6,500 of these freed people, known as Free Africans or Liberated Africans, were

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12 Causing passing ships to crash, thereby leaving their cargo vulnerable to theft.
13 American colonists who were devoted to the Crown and wanted to remain part of the British Empire.
brought to the country until 1860. Runaway slaves from the United States also made their way to The Bahamas, until emancipation was announced there in 1863.

The presence of the Loyalists brought many changes to New Providence, like the development of stricter laws and general law enforcement. A Police Force was started, including night guards, volunteers, and Justices of the Peace. The general influx of professionals – lawyers, doctors, accountants, and merchants – boosted the commercial life of the colony; the cultural life grew as well, with the establishment of a library and the first newspapers. All these improvements made The Bahamas more accommodating for the development of a tourism industry. During this time, advertisements for lodging in private guest homes appeared in the newspaper, like one for Victoria House, in 1844. This home was shortly transformed to French’s Hotel, and then Graycliff. It remains open today, as one of Nassau’s oldest and most famous hotels (Cleare 2007: 44-5).

In order to nurture the fledgling tourism industry, the government created a monetary incentive, in 1851, for any person or company to provide steamship service between Nassau and New York. The payment, initially set at £1,000, was raised to £3,000 per year, for a term of five years. Then, in 1859, the government began working on the first major hotel. In 1861, the luxurious, four-storey Royal Victoria was completed. It was envisioned as a place for winter visitors, but with the onset of the American Civil War, became the playground for blockade-runners (Cleare 2007: 46-7).

The slump in the economy lasted until the American Civil War, when President Lincoln’s blockade of the southern ports proved fruitful for Bahamians. Blockade-runners took cotton away from, and brought munitions to, these ports, which were unable to be properly manned by the larger northern ships. In 1860, imports were valued at £234,029 and exports at £157,350. By 1864, imports were £5,346,112 and exports £4,672,398 (Bethel 1991: 7). The influx of money was of great
benefit to Bahamians, particularly those living on New Providence. Historical accounts of this period speak of stores packed with goods, ports and warehouses full of boxes, barrels, and crates, food and liquor flowing freely, and money being spent carelessly and lavishly. Bay Street, the main street in Nassau, was widened, with the addition of curbstones and lights. Warehouses had to be constructed to contain all of the cotton and war supplies, and a new dock was developed.

The end of the American Civil War signaled the end of prosperity for the colony, and it once again entered an economic depression. This was made worse by the Great Bahama Hurricane of 1866, which remains on record as one of the worst in the country's history. Many Bahamians left the country to find work in the United States, Cuba, and Central America. Those who remained at home engaged in smaller industries, like salt making, timber and sisal export, and the sale of turtle and turtle-shell products, to sustain themselves. The colony became the first place in the world to commercially produce pineapples, which became a serious industry, along with sponging. The two helped buoy the economy in the early twentieth century. However, competition from Hawaii ended the pineapple industry, and a blight which hit the sponge beds in 1938, combined with the development of synthetic sponge materials, destroyed sponging forever.

**Beginnings of the Tourism Industry**

In 1900 the Hotel Colonial opened on New Providence. In 1913, to encourage more citizens to build hotels, the government created the Manufactories and Hotels Encouragement Act. This allowed individuals to bring in materials for “building, erection, alteration or repair of hotels” without import duties. Qualifying hotels had to be able to host at least 50 guests, and were also required to register and meet
several other stipulations to ensure they were using the materials in the manner intended by the act (Cleare 2007: 61). That year, the Lucerne Hotel opened (ibid: 66).

In 1914, the government created the Development Board. Members of this board were charged with promoting tourism through advertisements, information services, negotiation with carriers, and public relations, with a budget of £3,000 per annum. They established an office in Nassau and stocked it with information and maps for tourists. Despite their best efforts, inconsistent air and sea travel schedules, and the beginning of WWI, made their role very difficult. There was some improvement in the 1915-1916 season, and preparations were made for exciting events the next season, like a Fast Cruiser Motor Boat Race in conjunction with the Miami Regatta. However, all the steamships canceled their services to The Bahamas because of the poor diplomatic relations between the United States and Germany. The flow of visitors trickled to a tiny stream, forcing the Royal Victoria and the Hotel Colonial to close. From 1917-1918 there were 125 visitors, with similar numbers in the 1919-1920 season, a stark difference from the 2,680 visitors received in 1915-1916 (Cleare 2007: 68-9).

The colony was in dire straights, but the United State’s Congress passing of the Volstead Act in 1919 proved to be a savior. Import and export of liquor remained legal in the colony, and just like blockade-running in the Civil War, many Bahamians made fortunes rum-running to US ports. Private citizens were not the only beneficiaries, as the government’s treasury was filled by duties imposed on the alcohol flowing through its borders. The Royal Victoria was once again the center of action, filled with bootleggers and wealthy American visitors.

The first casinos were opened in 1920, one on New Providence, the Bahamian Club, and another in the newly opened Bimini Bay Rod and Gun Club on Bimini. There were more openings in New Providence as well, like the Rozelda Hotel and
Montagu Hotel (Cleare 2007:63, 65). Development of the aeronautical industry provided a great push to the tourism industry, and in 1929 Pan American World Airways began service to New Providence with amphibian planes. In 1934, the first aircraft landed in a barren area in the western part of New Providence, and in 1939, the Oakes Field airport was opened (ibid: 74).

Sir Bede Clifford, who became governor of The Bahamas in 1932, was committed to developing the tourism industry. His priorities included linking government, transportation, tourism, and hotel operations through joint ownership; advertising and promoting tourism; deepening Nassau Harbor; and creating a radio-telephone service to the United States. Telephones were installed in the New Colonial Hotel (formerly the Hotel Colonial) and the Fort Montagu Hotel, for use by guests and nearby residents. This development was described in the Nassau Guardian, a local daily, as a major asset to attract visitors (Cleare 2007:75).

The Cambridge Orchestra, led by Bert Cambridge, was the first band of professional Bahamian musicians. Formed in 1923, the ensemble competed with musicians brought in from the United States to perform in the Royal Victoria and British Colonial hotels. Cambridge approached Governor Clifford about discriminatory hiring practices by hoteliers, and Clifford responded by mandating all hotels hiring foreign bands to also employ a local group. As well as helping level the playing field, this regulation encouraged other Bahamians to study music, and lent some credibility and respectability to local artists. In the 1930s dancer Paul Meeres built the first nightclub and theatre, Paul Meeres Cabaret Club, in the Over-the-Hill area of New Providence, home to black Bahamians living in Grants Town and Bain Town. Another ensemble, the Chocolate Dandies, was also established, and

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14 The boundaries between ‘white’ and ‘black’ Bahamians are not so strictly described or perceived, and there are a number of words Bahamians use to indicate a person’s color – for example conchy joe, mango skin – however, for ease of explanation I will continue to use these categories.

The 1930s saw the formation of the Nassau Improvement Society by Lady Dundas, wife of then Colonial Secretary Charles Dundas. The aim of the society was to “promote the interests and wellbeing of the masses residing in The Bahamas, to give them better ideals of home life, hygiene, sanitation, and to teach the dignity of labor intelligently performed” (qtd. Cleare 2007: 76). The Association acquired property in Grant’s Town and opened the Dundas Civic Center. Members and volunteers gave training in sewing, dressmaking, hygiene, and gardening. Soon, the Center expanded to include a full kitchen and bedroom, thus modeling a home for the students to practice in. The aims of the Association’s program were to “turn idle young men and girls into self-respecting wage earners and thereby supply new homes, hotels, and boarding houses with trained recruits in or near Nassau,” and “to enhance the attractions of wintering in the island of New Providence by making life easier for the holiday maker” (ibid).

Before this time no Bahamians were qualified to work in the hotels, so owners had to recruit domestic and professional staff from overseas. In 1933, the manager of the Montagu Beach Hotel hired 80 students from the Dundas Civic Center as waiters – the first time local staff was employed in the hotel industry. The Center continued to train Bahamians to fill all the domestic spheres of the hotel business, supplying over 500 workers to hotels, boarding houses and private homes in New Providence (Cleare 2007: 77).

In the 1940s, because of its “attributes rivaling the Riviera in the Mediterranean coast,” Nassau was advertised as the Riviera of the western hemisphere (Cleare 2007: 97). Most hotels operated 3 months out of the year, during the winter season. Moreover, the ones near Bay Street, the center of commerce both
in New Providence and the colony as a whole, followed the strict segregation practiced in the United States and only accepted white guests. Unless they were staff or entertainers, black people were forbidden from entering hotels. To remedy this situation, several black Bahamians built hotels of their own, or converted their homes into guesthouses. Dr. Claudius R. Walker, for example, built the Rhinehart Hotel, which, in addition to its 14 guest rooms, had a 300-seat auditorium. The Rhinehart was a popular meeting place for Bahamians and visitors alike, hosting the International Elks Convention, wedding receptions, church, and political events. Mamie Worrell, one of the few Bahamian women who opened her home to visitors, catered to famous Americans, like W.E.B. Du Bois and his wife, and entertainers Roy Hamilton and Harry Belafonte (ibid: 106).

By the early 1940s, tensions were high between the ruling class of a small minority of white Bahamians and the majority class of black Bahamians. The white oligarchy kept a tight reign on the colony by maintaining powers across every political and economic sphere. Referencing their domination of the central and most important location in the colony, these men were known as “Bay Street,” or the “Bay Street Boys.” They legislated control of the franchise and monopolized ownership of the most fertile and attractive lands. They governed the local economy through informal modes of bribery and patronage, exploitative wage labor through import-export industry, and dependency on their class through the credit system. Furthermore, they dominated all enterprises and branches of trade, boatbuilding and boat ownership. One governor of The Bahamas, Sir Raynor Arthur, described Bay Street as “recalcitrant, stubborn and politically obtuse…not very numerous, but extremely powerful in the material sense and pretty unscrupulous” (Smith 2012: n.p.).

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15 Hotels were desegregated in 1956 (Cleare 2007: 48).
Historian Gordon Lewis identified them as “perhaps the most narrow-minded ruling class in the entire English-speaking Caribbean” (1968: 312).\footnote{Bay Street’s hegemony was extended through segregation in religious, educational and residential spheres. One of the clearest examples of this is seen in Collins Wall, which encapsulated Nassau, including the commercial centre of Bay Street and the harbor, Prince George Wharf, which was used for importing and exporting goods. The wall, which was unbroken for two miles and ten feet high, was originally built to demarcate the estate of Ralph Collins, a Bay Street merchant. Later, the land was subdivided into plots for an elite all-white private school, residences and commercial buildings. Adjacent to Collins Wall was Grant’s Town, and as such it lengthened residents’ commute to work and was dangerous and even fatal to many who chose to climb over rather than walk around it. It “literally walled in the whole of Grant’s Town from eastward expansion or even communication – a visible class and subethnic barrier built by the duped black underclass itself” (Craton and Saunders 1998: 268). Thus, Collins Wall came to symbolize the political, economic, and social divisions between the ruling class and the underclass.}

After the collapse of the sponging industry, and the adverse effects of the start of WWII on the small tourism and construction industries, the colony was in an economic depression and most Bahamians lived in abject poverty. In 1941, when the United States joined WWII, the British and American governments agreed to use islands in The Bahamas as air bases. Included in their plans was the enhancement of New Providence’s Oakes Field airport, and the building of another airport, Satellite Field, in the island’s western pine barrens. Pleasantville Corporation, an American firm, was engaged for the project.

Pleasantville hired both American and Bahamian laborers, but under instruction from both governments, paid the Bahamians at the local rate of four shillings per day while the Americans received twelve shillings. Four shillings reflected the rate established in 1936, before wartime inflation, and was thus wholly inadequate. The Bahamian laborers found out, and learned that although the firm was prepared to pay them the same rate, Bahamian employers were concerned about having to maintain the higher salaries of the men after the project was completed. Workers and their representative met on May 22, 1942. A petition to raise the rate to eight shillings was subsequently drafted and delivered to the governor. Action was slow in coming, however, and what began as an organized protest on May 31 grew into a riot on June 1. It involved thousands of Bahamians, with two killed and five...
wounded on the first day, and three killed before its end on the second (Craton and Saunders 1998: 286-290).

Afterward, the Duke of Windsor, sitting governor at the time, ordered a commission of inquiry to research the cause of the riots. The Russell Commission cited the economic depression, lack of social and labor legislation, and political inequalities, in addition to the immediate issue of the wage dispute. It was also understood – though not stated – by “everyone from the Duke of Windsor and the American vice-consul downward,” that race issues were a significant factor (Craton and Saunders 1998: 290). The Burma Road Riots – so named after the road joining Oakes Field and Satellite Field – were the first time Bahamians organized to protest the social, political and economic situation in the country (Bethel 1991: 72; cf. Galanis 2014).

**Serious Investment in the Tourism Industry**

Tourism in The Bahamas struggled in the post-war period, in stark contrast to tourism in Florida, which was thriving. The Development Board found that its success was due to Floridian local government and merchants investing heavily in promotion, and lobbied for the government to invest in tourism the same way. There was some resistance to this idea, as tourism was not considered a viable long-term economic plan. Nevertheless, following the 1949 General Election, members of the Legislature were persuaded to provide funds for promotion, and the tourism budget was increased by 66% in 1950, from £94,031 to £156,150 (Cleare 2007: 113). Additionally,

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77 The majority in the House of Assembly also organized their own Select Committee, which found fault with the administration for not informing the workers of the wage situation and mismanaging the crisis. They also blamed Pleasantville’s white employees and Bahamian labor leaders for stirring up trouble (Craton and Saunders 1998: 290-291).

78 The construction project was also associated with the Burma Road built by Burmese and Chinese workers during WWII, which Bahamians were familiar with because of newsreels and films (Craton and Saunders 1998: 522; Galanis 2014 n.p.).
Stafford Sands, a well-known lawyer and politician, was hired as the chairman of the Development Board. His plan to transform The Bahamas from a winter holiday hideaway to a year-round destination was hugely successful, and continues to be the model followed by the government today.

External factors also assisted in the growth of the industry in the 1950s. The International Labor Organization shortened the workweek, and guaranteed employees paid vacation each year and an early retirement. Travel became more affordable and package holidays were introduced, which also encouraged the middle class to participate in tourism. Furthermore, air conditioning, although available since 1902, became widely adopted across the business spectrum. The first fully air conditioned hotel appeared in The Bahamas in 1954, making year-round tourism possible, instead of its earlier confinement to the cooler winter months (Cleare 2007: 111-13).

The Bahamas Hotel Association was formed in 1952 to help hoteliers promote their establishments, and to work with the Development Board in advertising. Their work included creating vacation packages for the summer, and vacation packages tailored for visitors from the United States or Europe. Many hotels in this period were old, and, crucially, did not have air conditioning. The Hotels Encouragement Act of 1954 “allowed customs duty refunds on materials for use in the construction and furnishing of a new hotel, or for refurbishing property. The Act also granted a ten-year exemption from real property tax and a 20-year exemption from direct taxation on hotel earnings” (Cleare 2007: 114). Hotels on New Providence had to have at least twenty rooms to qualify, and hotels on the Family Islands at least ten. This led to development and growth across the country, with new resorts opening on Eleuthera.

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9 Stafford Sands received the Order of the British Empire in 1955 and was knighted in 1963. After the UBP was defeated in 1967, he went into voluntary exile in Spain. He died five years later, at the age of 59, in London, England. His portrait is on the Bahamian $10 (Cleare 2007: 395, 398).
Andros and Exuma; previously, Bimini and Grand Bahama were the only Family Islands with hotel accommodations (ibid: 120).

1957 saw the establishment of The Bahamas Tour Operators and Sightseeing Association. This organization developed rates and tours, and assisted the Development Board in marketing the colony through teaching travel agencies and tour wholesalers about the hotels, attractions, and other benefits of booking travel to The Bahamas (Cleare 2007: 135). Members of the Association also participated in the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA). In 1956, ASTA held a 5-day conference in Nassau. In his speech at the concluding banquet, sitting president Tom Donovan said: “During the next five to seven years we can expect The Bahamas to have at least 250,000 visitors each year. We of the travel business have come to realize that The Bahamas Development Board has done more in a shorter time to sell travel than any other country or area in the world” (ibid: 136).

Stafford Sands focused the work of the Development Board heavily on promotion, spending its budget “nearly exclusively on communications, promotions, and incentives to carriers” (Cleare 2007: 127). This was done primarily through newspaper and magazine advertising, a public relations campaign in North America and England, and a sales promotion campaign. Glossy, color, one and two-page ads were placed in select consumer and high fashion magazines in the United States and Canada. Editorials on the Bahamas were seen regularly in publications like Time, Business Week, Ladies Home Journal, Harper’s Bazaar, Cosmopolitan and Esquire. Journalists and newscasters were brought to The Bahamas to write feature stories and free trips attracted celebrities and movie stars. Pictures of these renowned personalities were sent to their hometown newspaper. An average of 2,000 photos were accepted per year, allowing for effective, and inexpensive, further exposure. There were also contests in the United States and Canada that sent winners on
luxurious vacations in The Bahamas; pictures from these holidays were in turn used for further advertisement (ibid: 127-128). The hugely successful campaign resulted in, on average, a 20% increase in visitor arrivals from year to year during the decade, from 45,371 in 1950 to 244,258 in 1959 (ibid: 148-9).

The Development Board hired the Royal Bahamas Police Force Band and other local artists to entertain visitors, and to appear in marketing materials for the colony. The Police Force Band was formed in 1840 with 16 men. Fifty-three years later, it was reported that there were 12 members allowed two four-hour practice periods a week, and who performed at official engagements. Although they received some support from private citizens, it was not until the Development Board’s intervention in the 1950s that the band truly expanded. In 1952, they acquired more brass instruments, received tutelage from the bandmaster of the US Air Force Band, New Mexico, and performed at 39 engagements. Later improvements included a more elaborate uniform and elevation to the status of permanent unit of the Police Force (Cleare 2007: 107).

Professional musicians benefitted greatly from the rapid expansion of the tourism industry. Beginning in this period and continuing until independence, performers had no shortage of work in Bay Street and hotel nightclubs. Popular Bay Street venues included Blackbeard’s Tavern, Junkanoo (formerly Spider Web), the Big Bamboo, Ba Ma, Parliament Street Club, and Dirty Dick’s; Pino’s and Sloppy Joe’s were clubs in the Prince George Hotel. Every hotel employed at least one band, and offered live music from 7pm to midnight on weekdays and on Saturdays at 1pm. (Cleare 2007: 159-60).

Entertainers also had broader access to hotel venues – previously musicians were relegated to pool and bar side performances – and there were more clubs that opened Over-the-Hill. Popular venues were the Silver Slipper, Zanzibar, Cat & Fiddle,
and the Drumbeat Club. Unlike the discriminatory Bay Street venues, these were frequented by both Bahamians and tourists, who would be guided Over-the-Hill after the Bay Street locations closed. Bahamian and international musicians performed in these clubs, including Nat King Cole, Harry Belafonte, James Brown, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Byron Lee, and Perez Prado. Hundreds of people would come and hear them perform, and “these clubs were sites of musical collaboration that could not be found anywhere else in Nassau” (Rommen 2011: 97; C. Justilien 2004: n.p.; Cleare 2007: 159-160).

The fight for political and social equality continued in this period, and saw the first successfully formed politically party, the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) in 1953. The PLP was created to represent the needs of all Bahamians, rather than the interests of the minority. The discriminatory practices of hotels extended to other spheres of social life. Black Bahamians were unable to enter certain stores or restaurants, or go to the cinema. They were not shown in any tourism advertisements for the colony, except in a service capacity. Voting was restricted to male property owners over the age of 21, and included a plural voting system which allowed for one man to have more than one vote. In addition to excluding women this structure excluded most black men. As controllers of the business community, members of the House were easily elected, and used their political power to their commercial benefit. On top of this restriction of the franchise, the Bay Street Boys maintained their domination through bribery and intimidation (Smith 2012; cf. Bethel 2012).

In January 1958, leaders of the colony were thrown into a frenzy as hundreds of public and private sector workers walked off their jobs. The General Strike lasted nineteen days and drove business to a halt. Its roots were in the division of taxi

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[31] The Oakes Field neighborhood had its fair share of nightclubs as well, such as the Banana Boat and the Skylark Club (this underwent a number of name changes). Other venues dotted the island, like the Blue Notes (formerly the Native Club), Hutch Night Club, Bird Land, and the Yellow Bird (formerly the Coconut Palm) (Cleare 2007: 160).
business for the new international airport, which opened in November 1957. Hotel operators were poised to sign an agreement giving exclusive rights for one taxi company to ferry tourists to and from the airport to their establishments. The company was owned by the son of the leader of the government, and would likely have ended in a monopoly of this business, thus cutting out all other taxi drivers from a route they had been driving since the 1930s. In protest, the taxi drivers blockaded the airport on November 2 and 3, forcing airlines to cancel flights. This action was moderately successful, as it allowed them to enter two-month negotiations with the authorities that led to an equitable division of the route. However, the leaders reached a stalemate over the issue of surplus visitors, as the hoteliers refused to agree to a first-come-first-served basis for these passengers. At that point, they also tried to reopen already finalized agreements (Smith 2012).

The taxi drivers union called on other workers for help. At a meeting of the Bahamas Federation of Labor it was unanimously decided that they “should call a general strike to aid the taxi union and to dramatize the fight of all Bahamians for greater dignity and self-respect on the jobsite through decent wages and better working conditions” (Smith 2012: n.p.). The next morning, Monday January 13, hotel, electricity and construction workers, garbage collectors, longshoremen, civil servants, airline and restaurant staff walked off their jobs; Bahamians also boycotted the shops on Bay Street. It only took days for the hotels to close and the city to come to a standstill. The strike received international publicity and support, and the governor called for troops from Jamaica to reinforce Bahamian policemen, whose loyalty was not guaranteed (ibid).

The General Strike ended on January 30, 1958, after the governor promised to organize a transport authority to resolve the taxi drivers’ grievances. Although this was not an outright win for the workers, their action paved the way for a number of
civil rights changes in the coming decades. That same year, a senior British cabinet minister came to New Providence to facilitate constitutional reforms, and legislation was passed to create a labor department and process of industrial conciliation (Smith 2012). In 1959, the company vote and the property qualification for voting were abolished, the franchise was extended to all men over 21, and four new parliamentary seats were created. Women were extended the suffrage in 1962, after fourteen years of petitioning, and the plural vote was abolished in 1964 (cf. Bethel 2012).

In January 1964 The Bahamas achieved internal self-government, and transitioned into a ministerial form of governance. Stafford Sands was made both Minister of Tourism and Minister of Finance, and as such saw to it that Tourism received the funds it needed to maintain its promotional stamina. Between 1960 and 1966, the tourism budget increased an average of 10.5% per year. Its allocations were huge, even by global standards: in 1965, the US spent $3.5 million on tourism, while The Bahamas spent over $4 million. The efforts of the Ministry saw great results, however, with visitor arrivals surpassing predictions made by an American research corporation, and breaking the 800,000 mark by 1966 (Cleare 2007: 153). The Bahamas was far and away the leader of tourism, with more than double the arrivals of Jamaica, which was the second in the region with 350,000 (ibid: 162). Notably, the United States’ embargo of Cuba was a huge boon to the colony, as it shifted most of the tourism away from Cuba – its greatest competitor and which previously had dominated tourism in the region – and onto The Bahamas. Also in 1966, Sands guided the Ministry of Finance to the introduction of the Bahamian dollar. It was fixed to the US dollar, thereby enabling tourists from the country’s largest market to avoid conversion rates, making it even easier for them to visit (ibid: 396). The funds from the success of tourism in the 1960s allowed for the improvement of harbors, infrastructure, medical facilities, and social programs across the country (ibid: 153).
Nevertheless, most Bahamians were still chafing under the thumb of the Bay Street Boys, who had organized into the United Bahamian Party in 1958. Their gerrymandering in the 1962 election placed them again in the seat of government, despite the PLP winning the popular vote. At the beginning of April 1965, during the debate on the report of the Constituencies Committee, PLP politicians began protesting in the House of Assembly. Their action was supported by crowds outside the House, which daily increased in number. Milo Butler and Arthur Hanna spoke for longer than their allotted turn in the House, defying the instructions of the Speaker to cease talking. This led then Premier, Roland Symonette, to speak to Bahamians over the radio, begging them not to disrupt through disorder the prosperity they had achieved, and warning them that his government would not be swayed.

The protests reached their climax, however, on April 27, 1965, a day known as Black Tuesday. Lynden Pindling, leader of the PLP, picked up the 165 year-old mace, symbol of the authority of Parliament, and threw it outside, explaining that its authority belonged in the hands of the people. Milo Butler quickly followed Pindling’s action, by throwing the hourglasses – used by the Speaker to time members’ speeches – out of the window as well. Next, the PLP left the House, pre-empting arrest, and joined the awaiting crowd. The Riot Act had to be read as hundreds of Bahamians sat down, joining Pindling in his demonstration, and the crowd dispersed to a nearby field.

Black Tuesday was one of the most significant events on the road to majority rule. The next general election, January 1967, resulted in a tie between the PLP and the UBP. An Independent and a Labor Party candidate also each won seats. Both the PLP and the UBP tried to woo Randol Fawkes, leader of the Labor Party, to their side.
He agreed to form a coalition with the PLP, giving them the majority, and thereby changing the face of government.\(^2\)

Excitement filled many Bahamians at the victory of the PLP. Lynden Pindling became the first black Premier of The Bahamas, and recognizing the importance of tourism to the economy, appointed himself as Minister of Tourism. In contrast to the 1960s, the early 1970s were a difficult period for the tourism industry. The United States’ government instituted policies to counter inflation, which impacted consumer spending, borrowing, and travel. This, combined with the energy crisis and high unemployment, negatively impacted tourism. Moreover, tourists reported unsatisfactory service by Bahamian hotel staff. To remedy this, Pindling instituted a motto – Look Up, Move Up, The World is Watching – to encourage Bahamians to improve their attitudes to guests and take more pride in their work (Cleare 2007: 164, 166). The Hotels Act of 1970 introduced controls in the industry, requiring establishments with four or more rooms to submit to regular inspections and to be licensed annually by the autonomous Hotel Licensing Board (ibid: 206).

In addition to great expansion\(^2\) of hotels on New Providence and in the Family Islands, this decade was marked by Bahamianization.\(^3\) After two years as minister, Pindling handed the portfolio over to Arthur Foulkes\(^4\) in 1969 (Cleare 2007: 167). During his tenure, Foulkes hired the first Bahamian Senior Executive at the head office in Nassau. The first Bahamian Assistant Director of Tourism was also hired that year. Young Bahamians were recruited to fill a number of other posts,

\(^{21}\) Alvin Braynen, the independent candidate, took on the neutral role of Speaker of the House.

\(^{22}\) Four hotels were built on New Providence, five on Paradise Island, five on Grand Bahama, four on Eleuthera, one on the Berry Islands, and one on Abaco (Cleare 2007: 199-200).

\(^{23}\) This was a policy introduced by the PLP to “foster economic prosperity and independence through greater participation in business, finance and commerce by Bahamians, the protection of Bahamian assets for the benefit of Bahamians, whether through land or sustenance of state-owned enterprises and a more strict policy regarding the granting of Bahamian citizenship” (Davis The Nassau Guardian June 7, 2012).

\(^{24}\) Now Sir Arthur Foulkes, he went on to become the eighth Bahamian Governor General, serving from 2010-2014.
including tourist information, market research, public relations, sales promotion, and overseas sales and information representatives. The Tourism Advisory Board was restructured, from six to thirteen seats, and so that there were representatives from agencies that dealt closely with tourism – the Taxicab Union, Bahamas Hotel Association, Tour Operators Association, Nightclub Owners and Operators, Straw Vendors Association, Grand Bahama Tourist & Convention Board – as well as representatives from airlines, shipping agencies, and private citizens standing in for the Family Islands (ibid: 172).

According to Cleare, the “results of marketing research revealed an absence” of cultural identity associated with The Bahamas in the minds of potential tourists, and explains that this was because “the people and culture played little role in the marketing” up to that period (2007: 211). Bethel (1991) records the Development Board’s efforts made to promote Junkanoo in the 1920s and again in the late 1940s, but either this had no lasting impact on target audiences or it never made that much of an impact at all. In any event, Goombay Summer was introduced in 1971, as part of a campaign to “expose visitors to Bahamian culture, to showcase the friendliness of the local people, and to ensure that tourists would return year after year” (Cleare 2007: 211).

Goombay Summer was a collection of all aspects of Bahamian culture, put on display for 13 weeks in Nassau, New Providence and Freeport, Grand Bahama. It included traditional music and dance, food, performances by the Police Band, fashion shows at hotels, and art exhibitions. There were also special holiday packages designed particularly with attendance at the festival in mind. Summer months were still slower than winter months for arrivals, and the hope was that Goombay Summer
would help combat the warmer month slump. It was very successful, but closed after its final season in 1992 (Cleare 2007: 211; Catalyn 2014).5

In 1976, the National Tourism Achievement Awards (NTAA) were launched, recognizing Bahamians for excellence in their tourism-related careers. Individuals nominated their peers across the service spectrum – straw-workers, musicians, dancers, taxi drivers, bartenders, hoteliers – for exhibiting qualities of “responsibility, sensitivity, expertise and friendliness to tourists and, by so doing, had enhanced the reputation of The Bahamas as a tourist destination” (Cleare 2007: 220). The NTAA became very prestigious in the tourism industry, and continued until 1991. In 1995, the Cacique Awards picked up where the NTAA left off, and it continues to honor Bahamians today.

Tourism at the Turn of the Century

In the 1980s, tourism became the world’s largest industry, and The Bahamas government continued to enlarge the Ministry of Tourism’s budget. Close attention was still paid to promotions, with increased focus on the variety provided by each island in the archipelago. However, the rest of the Caribbean provided stiff competition as they began to refine and promote their own tourism products. As a result, The Bahamas suffered a decline in its market share (Cleare 2007).

5 People-to-People is another program that was supposed to help create a cultural identity in the minds of tourists. Established in 1975 as a tripartite program – People-to-People at Home, at Sea, and Home Away from Home – it continues today but with two arms. People-to-People at Home continues to be in operation, offering tourists daytime encounters with Bahamians. Additionally, the Governor General hosts a tea party in his/her home on the last Friday of every month. This hour long event provides a sampling of Bahamian culture through food, a live band, arts and crafts, a fashion show, and interaction with Bahamians (personal conversation with Bridgette Rahming, Ministry of Tourism, April 15, 2015; cf. Cleare 2007).

6 So-named after the title of the Lucayan chief.
The challenges faced by the industry called for renewed energy in the 1990s. In this period, the Ministry of Tourism focused on refurbishing both hotels and the general appearance of New Providence: $1.5 million was invested in a project to beautify Bay Street; $1.2 million to redevelop the Prince George Wharf, site of cruise ship arrivals; improvements were made to the Nassau International Airport; and Arawak Cay, an area north of Bay Street, was developed as a heritage site. The government also divested itself of all but two publicly owned hotel properties, one in New Providence and the other in Andros. A major victory for the government was the agreement made with Sol Kerzner to develop the Atlantis resort on Paradise Island. Kerzner’s initial $800 million investment launched construction in 1994, and the first phase was completed in 1996. Kerzner’s vision for Atlantis was far beyond anything that had ever been imagined in the industry, including the Caribbean’s largest casino, more than 2,300 guest rooms, 11 million gallons of water activities, and the world’s largest aquarium, with 50,000 marine animals (Cleare 2007: 294-5).

Development of Atlantis continued throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, and the third phase was completed in 2007. Atlantis now boasts 3,400 rooms, a 14-acre dolphin habitat and education center, a 140-acre water park, and the largest conference space in the Caribbean (Atlantis 2015; Cvent Supplier Network 2015).

Today Baha Mar, self-styled the Bahamian Riviera, is the largest single-phase luxury resort in the Caribbean. Developers invested $3.5 billion into the project, and it is slated to open in May 2015. Based on New Providence, the mega-resort boasts the largest casino in the region and is targeted at higher-end consumers searching for “sophisticated leisure” (Baha Mar 2015). Tourism remains the most important industry in the nation, and the Ministry of Tourism continues to have far and away the highest

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27 After twenty-five years in power, the PLP was unseated by the Free National Movement (FNM) in the 1992 General Elections.
budget allocation of all the government ministries. For the fiscal year 2012-2013, the Progressive Liberal Party earmarked almost $86 million dollars to tourism. The Ministry of Education, which had the second highest budget, received approximately $49 million. In third place was the Ministry of Works and Urban Development, with roughly $26 million (The Bahamas Weekly 2012). Visitor expenditures dwarf the government investment, however. In 2005, the $78 million budgeted was multiplied 26 times over, with visitors spending over $2 billion (Cleare 2007: 368). The strength of its tourism industry has transformed The Bahamas into one of the wealthiest nations in the Caribbean, with a GNI per capita of $21,570 (World Bank 2015).

According to Minister of Youth, Sports, and Culture Dr. Daniel Johnson, “The tourism industry accounts for more than 60 percent of the country’s GDP and provides employment for about one-half of the country’s workforce” (The Tribune 2014b).

Although economic inequalities are still a serious problem, and development has not been consistent across the archipelago, there can be little argument that tourism dollars are responsible for most of the changes that modernized and developed The Bahamas.

Looking solely at quantifiable data, however, presents an incomplete picture of how tourism has impacted Bahamians. Most obviously, it prevents an analysis of how grooming a nation to be constantly hospitable to others can have negative consequences. Reflecting on my childhood, I have many memories, albeit vague, of moments when I would ask myself privately, and heard individuals ask publicly, how any number of incidents would affect both the tourist experience and our

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28 Information on the 2014-2015 budget was not available online.
29 According to the most recent census done in 2010, there are 351,461 people living in The Bahamas (Bahamas Department of Statistics 2010).
international image. These ranged from the more mundane, like a lack of sidewalks for pedestrians, to the very serious, like the rate of crime. Certainly we were concerned for ourselves, but it is hard to say if this was before or after we thought of our potential visitors. In one way, the concerns are one and the same, since tourism is responsible for our livelihoods. Yet the needs and issues of the nation, and the best practices for them to be met and solved, are not always going to be in alignment with what is best for tourism. It is astounding to think of how far we place tourists’ needs above our own, how much we try to anticipate and fulfill their desires before we have fully contemplated our own. Furthermore, the fact that I was aware of these issues as a child, even if I was especially conscientious, demonstrates the degree to which these priorities have filtered through society.

It was not until I left home to pursue undergraduate studies that I realized how far the orientation towards hospitality had affected me. Perhaps it was from living in a place where people put their country and their fellow citizens first. Perhaps it was the times I felt myself fumbling for the right words to describe what it was like to live at home, when the inquirer imagined my home as nothing but paradise. Or perhaps it was the times I felt self-conscious in classroom discussions, when I wanted to make points that would have poked holes in the mask The Bahamas wears for the outside world, but was uncomfortable doing so because they might make potential tourists in the room think twice about visiting. No matter the reason, I know now that whatever else exerts major force on the nation – its geography, demography, or status as postcolony – tourism is an ever-present actor. Its influence is equally as profound as the aforementioned factors, if not moreso, but it is the one thing that does not get explicit analysis or acknowledgement by the populace. The shadow of the past, present, and future Tourist hangs over both public and private spheres, affecting a myriad of decisions in ways that we have hardly begun to understand.
Junkanoo, a festival Bahamians consider a part of their heart and soul, developed long before The Bahamas began courting the tourism industry. It has not completely avoided changes made with tourists in mind, but it has remained firmly in the domain of Bahamians. The next chapter will look closely at its history and the role it plays in society.
Junkanoo, Soundmark of The Bahamas

I started going to Junkanoo parades when I was around 10 years old. I remember the very first night, beginning with the fact that I had to go to bed earlier than usual because my grandfather was coming to pick me up in the wee hours of Boxing Day morning. I can still picture the turquoise wall of my bedroom illuminated by the beams of the outdoor light, the first thing I saw when my mum woke me to get ready. That first morning was exhilarating and terrifying. My grandfather, a career civil servant, had seats for the two of us in Rawson Square, the central part of Bay Street and the most prestigious part of the parade route. I had a near unobstructed view of the brightly colored and expertly decorated costumes, and was dazzled equally by the smaller ones on the dancers, the huge lead banners that required groups of people to push and pull them, and every other size in between. I felt my heart pulsing along with the drums, and was compelled to dance along to the music. Our seats were on the southern side of the square, and I looked in amazement at the packed section on the opposite side of the street. I wondered if our side looked like the same dancing mass theirs did. I remember being afraid that all of the bleachers would collapse under everyone’s weight and movement. Overcome by everything I saw, heard, and felt, I knew that I was witnessing something far older and greater than myself. I did not only feel like a witness, however. I was enveloped in the experience, and knew that Junkanoo was a part of me, that I could tap into the power I felt that morning whenever I needed to.

After that night, I made it a point, as far as it was possible, to go to at least one parade every season. I have gone with my mother and sister, with extended family, and with friends. I have experienced the parade with and without a ticket, arrived at different times in the course of the event, and watched – sitting or standing – from
different vantage points along the route. For me, and countless other Bahamians, Junkanoo is part and parcel of the Christmas season, a fixture in the revelries of that time of year. However, it goes further than just Christmastime – Junkanoo is the preeminent event on the Bahamian cultural calendar. In order to explain how this once marginal, and largely ignored, cultural practice achieved this stature, and to illustrate the now deep pride and affection Bahamians have for Junkanoo, in this chapter I review its development, and describe its contemporary structure.

**History**

There is very little early documentation of Junkanoo in The Bahamas, making it difficult to distinguish its models and antecedents. We know that it began during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and that there were similar celebrations that happened in slave communities across the Anglophone Black Atlantic. In Jamaica, the festival is known as Jonkonnu, and it is from there that we have the earliest references from elite observers like physician Sir Hans Sloane (1707) and colonial administrator Edward Long (1774) (Rommen 2011: 121). There are also descriptions of Junkanoo from Belize, Bermuda, St. Vincent, and North Carolina. In all these places, the celebrations happened around the Christmas holiday. Other shared characteristics included masking the face, animal mimicry through the use of animal hides and horns, and drumming and dancing (Wisdom 1985; Bethel 1991; Rommen 2011).

The earliest accounts of slave celebrations in The Bahamas come from a diary kept by plantation owner Paul Farquharson. It confirms that slaves were given a three-day holiday during the Christmas season, and an 1832 entry describes a “grand

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30 In Belize it was known as John Canoe. In North Carolina it was known as John Kuner, John Kooner, John Canoe, Who-Who’s, and joncooner. There is no evidence John Canoe or any similar name was used in St. Vincent, although there were Christmas celebrations there that paralleled those in the aforementioned places which included a Moco Jumbo figure on stilts. There are descriptions of stiltwalkers known as Gombeys in Bermuda (Bethel 1978).
dance” on San Salvador, an island in the southern Bahamas (qtd. Bethel 1991: 25). It is unclear, however, whether this dance was Junkanoo, or linked to Junkanoo in any way, and also whether the same dance occurred on other islands. An article from a daily newspaper in December 1849 is the first time Junkanoo is recorded as happening on Bay Street, and the first post-emancipation account of Junkanoo. It describes “John Canoe” on stilts with a train of followers (The Nassau Guardian 1849, qtd. Rommen 2011: 130). For most of its existence Junkanoo was solely the domain of men. In the early days, like the participants in the aforementioned countries, they would mask their faces, create costumes out of whatever scraps they had lying around, and make music with goombay drums, cowbells, whistles and conch shells.

There are a number of theories to the African origins of Junkanoo festivals, but scholars tend to agree on the fact that they involved syncretism of slaves’ home traditions in their new environment (Bethel 1978 and 1991; Wisdom 1985; Rommen 2011). However, Judith Bettelheim and Keith Wisdom both declare that beyond its name, Junkanoo in The Bahamas has no real connection to these other parades. According to Bettelheim:

Although no proof exists, it would seem that Christmas masquerading was practiced in Nassau and the name “John Canoe” was applied to the practice, ex post facto, by someone who knew of the well publicized Jamaican tradition. This is an important point, for many scholars and devotees of Jonkonnu parades fail to realize that often the style of the Christmas festivities and the name applied to them – Jonkonnu – can indeed be two distinct entities with little or no real historical relationship. (1979: 204)

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31 Ira Reid (1942) claims that the John Canoe festival “king” was a fixture in The Bahamas as early as 1801, but does not explain how he draws this conclusion (353).
32 Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1834.
33 It also describes a “Militia Band and the fifes and drums of the Regiment break[ing] on the slumberer’s ear,” but it is unclear how far this music accompanied the John Canoes.
34 Bahamian drums originally constructed by stretching goat or sheep skin over one end of a barrel, the other end is left open.
Regardless of the depth of its relationship to other Junkanoos in the region, the practice in The Bahamas was the only one to thrive\textsuperscript{35} after the abolition of slavery. One explanation for this is rooted in the separation between the slave owners and the enslaved. Unlike other systems of slavery in the New World, the one in The Bahamas was not solely dependent on plantations. The colony had a diversified economy, and in addition to field and domestic work, slaves were engaged in fishing, construction work, salt production, wrecking, subsistence farming, and trading. As a result, they were not as enmeshed in plantation hierarchies and lived more independently from their masters. Junkanoo in The Bahamas was an activity by and for the slaves. According to Bethel, although it is possible that it was “a source of entertainment for the whites, [it] would not have been as much a part of the masters’ holidays as it was elsewhere” (1991: 31). Therefore, although it was not the same – likely subsidized – elaborate show as it was in other colonies, Junkanoo was “never dependent upon the whites for survival” and “was not affected economically by Emancipation” (Bethel 1991: 33).

Scholars also highlight the importance of Guy Fawkes Day\textsuperscript{36} (November 5) as a safeguard for Junkanoo. Fortuitously, Junkanoo shared two elements in common with traditional Guy Fawkes celebrations – burning effigies and setting off fireworks. Thus, Junkanooers could begin practicing and performing when Guy Fawkes celebrations began, all under the guise of a seemingly patriotic act. The momentum created on Guy Fawkes Day would both sustain Junkanooers and prepare the general

\textsuperscript{35} Jonkonnu in Jamaica and John Canoe in Belize are still practiced today, though in marginal communities. A quick YouTube search of both resulted in videos from as recently as 2012.

\textsuperscript{36} Guy Fawkes was a conspirator in the 1605 Gunpowder Plot to assassinate James I and blow up the Houses of Parliament. He was caught guarding the gunpowder and was executed for high treason. November 5 is a night of celebration in Britain (and to a greater or lesser extent its colonies) that Fawkes was killed.
public for them to reappear on Christmas morning (Bethel 1991; cf. Wisdom 1985; Rommen 2011).

The arrival of roughly 6,500 Liberated Africans to the Bahamas was also a significant factor in the preservation of Junkanoo. Recall from chapter one that the British Navy freed Africans from ships captured in their waters and released them to The Bahamas. They added “an intermittent stream of African language, custom, and ritual to the social fabric of the Afro-Bahamian community” (Rommen 2011: 134). Moreover, they served as “reminders of African cultural vitality and value” (ibid). Scholars agree their presence contributed to the continuation of Junkanoo (Bethel 1991; Rommen 2011).

Although it was preserved, Junkanoo was in a tenuous position throughout the 19th and the early 20th century. Numerous national and international factors, like the Great Bahama Hurricane of 1866, WWI, the Volstead Act, and a succession of failed industries, alternatively served to devastate and boost the economy. Junkanoo during these years was affected by whether or not men could afford to create costumes to participate. Furthermore, the opinion of Junkanoo held by the ruling classes was a significant marker of whether or not the festival would be allowed from year to year, and also to the ways that the festival transformed itself.

Junkanoo was highly stigmatized because of its African roots, the low socio-economic status of participants and the violence that often accompanied each parade. The elites’ disdain of Junkanoo was reflected in a number of newspaper articles and letters to the editor that complained about the noise, recklessness and general

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“[I]n the 1880s, another factor emerged which also helped keep the tradition [of Junkanoo] alive – the involvement of whites” (Bethel 1991: 34). Men in the ruling merchant class participated in both Guy Fawkes celebrations and the continuation of Junkanoo preparations afterward. L.D. Powles worked as a Circuit Magistrate in The Bahamas in the 1880s. He wrote about his experience, and described the Guy Fawkes celebrations, followed by activities around Christmas time, when the “darkies” would “march about day and night with lanterns and bands of music…This is a terrible nuisance, but the custom has the sanction of antiquity, though no doubt it would have been put down long ago if the white young gentlemen had not exhibited a taste for the same amusement” (qtd. ibid: 35).
tendency to immorality that Junkanoo encouraged among participants. On the nights of Junkanoo, men would ‘rush’\textsuperscript{38} Bay Street. This meant that they were crossing into ‘forbidden’ territory and posing a direct threat to the equilibrium between races and classes. Furthermore, all the frustrations and grievances of the rushers would be expelled through fighting during the parades, which, especially during economic hardship, began to “resemble mock brawls rather than seasonal celebrations” (Bethel 1991: 37). Bands of men from various neighborhoods on the island would use Junkanoo as a time to avenge grievances from earlier in the year.

Rough costumes contributed to the frightening picture of Junkanooers. With little money and limited fabric, men used “newspaper, sponge, banana leaves, tissue paper and ‘crocus sack’ – the coarse brown sacking in which imported foods were contained” to adorn themselves. Their faces were disguised by blackening them with charcoal, whitening them with flour, wearing a stocking over the head, or otherwise wearing ‘sifter-faces,’ store-bought masks that were “pinkish-white in color and totally devoid of expression…with two slits for the eyes.” The outfit was complete with a hat, usually something tall and conical, with a wide brim, or in the shape of a large wasps’ nest (Bethel 1991: 42).

Alarmed by the “indiscriminate marching about ‘day and night’ at Christmas time,” the government legislated the Street Nuisances Prohibition Act of 1899 to “banish ‘nuisances’ from the streets for most of the year” (Bethel 1991: 37). This was the beginning of serious regulation and institutionalization of Junkanoo on behalf of

\textsuperscript{38} “Rush” is the term given for the act of participating in Junkanoo. In a conversation I had with a friend of mine, he recounted a childhood experience watching a documentary on ZNS – the government television network – about the early forms of Junkanoo. The documentary featured a septuagenarian from Andros, who explained that when she was a child, rushing was associated with a church activity. The tradition was to dance around the church space, into its yard, and back into the church, to celebrate the bringing in of the New Year. This practice was popular across the Family Islands, and the interviewee made the argument that this was how the verb came to be associated with Junkanoo, and that this practice contributed to the development of a New Year’s day parade. This was the very first time I have come across this extraordinary information, so I have included a transcript of this conversation in the appendices. Unfortunately, I was not able to obtain a copy of the television program.
the government. In later years, it became customary to waive the Act during Christmastime, but there were instances when it was upheld as punishment for various infractions. In 1922, for example, the Hotel Colonial burned down and Bahamians were passed over in favor of hiring Cuban workers for the reconstruction project. Although the workers were mollified, the government was still concerned about possible retaliation and did not waive the Street Nuisances Prohibition Act that year (Bethel 1991; Rommen 2011).

In spite of being subject to the whims of the government, Bahamians were well aware of the power of Junkanoo to send a political message to Bay Street. Bethel (1991) contends that the tradition of using Junkanoo as a means of enacting social and political action began at the end of the century, when Junkanooers gathered on Christmas Eve in 1890 to call on the Governor and discuss their unemployment situation. In response to banning of Junkanoo in 1922, Junkanooers made the dramatic decision to host Junkanoo in Grant’s Town the following year, and boycott the stores of Bay Street merchants (Bethel 1991; Rommen 2011).

The maintenance and development of Junkanoo in the 20th century was due in no small part to the expansion of the tourism industry. The Development Board decided to include Junkanoo in its advertisement of The Bahamas’ distinguishing characteristics, and in 1925 introduced a cash prize to the individuals wearing the best costumes. The music however was considered nothing more than noise, and in fact the Board arranged for the Police Band to head the parade. Bethel explains, “By 1928, Junkanoo was being hailed as a native Bahamian custom, a fine example of primitive African ritual, and an asset to the tourist trade” (1991: 54). The European aspects of the parade were ignored not only to promote it to tourists, but also to separate it from the ruling class. Shortly after the Development Board’s organizing efforts, however,
Junkanoo entered a two-decade long decline, “fraught with violence, official bans, its use as protest, and general hostility toward the festival” (Rommen 2011: 143).

In 1933, the Junkanoo Committee, later renamed the Masquerade Committee, was formed. The Committee worked alongside the Development Board to supply cash prizes to Junkanoo, similar to the work of the Board in 1925, but the parade floundered. Bethel (1991) points out that the ruling class’ interest in Junkanoo was only so far as it could help boost the tourism industry. Junkanoo was seen as a colorful spectacle to entice tourists, nothing more. Thus, the welfare of Bahamian workers’ – the root of the issue of unsightly costumes and violent parades – was not taken into consideration when deciding how to improve the parade. Unsurprisingly, as the years passed and times grew worse, public opinion turned against Junkanoo and it was once more seen as a nuisance. The economic depression of that period pushed many Bahamians from the Family Islands to New Providence in search of work. Bethel suggests that poverty caused by the depression motivated the government to ban Junkanoo in 1929, for fear of how scrappy the participants might look (1991: 56). Junkanoo was prohibited again in 1935, after labor unrest in New Providence; later in the decade attempts were made to ban Junkanoo altogether.

Bethel interprets the unrest as akin to the riots happening elsewhere in the West Indies at the time, pointing out that perhaps the “mere symbolism of the parades – a mass occupation of Bay Street for a night – was sufficient to appease the laboring classes and keep them from protesting more violently” (1991: 71). The protests could only be postponed for so long, however, and the situation erupted in 1942 with the Burma Road Riots. Bethel links these too, to Junkanoo and its role in sociopolitical action. First, because the workers “planned the march into town and then sang as they went suggests they were accompanied by [goombay] drummers,”

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39 Bethel notes “there were serious riots in Barbados (1937), Jamaica (1938), St. Vincent (1935) and Trinidad (1937)” (1978: 231-232).
following the tradition of other deputations. Second, because they occupied Bay Street, an action popularized by Junkanooers. In so doing they carried what was normally a symbolic gesture to its violent extreme. Finally, the riots inspired a song, “Goin’ Down Burma Road,” which told the story of the riot, similar to “Do A’Nanny” a popular Junkanoo song about the burning of the Hotel Colonial. Bethel describes “Goin Down Burma Road” as a Junkanoo song as well, which not only tells the story of what happened, but also recreates the rhythm of the march (1991: 73).

After the riots, all public gatherings were banned, and Junkanoo did not appear legally (on Bay Street) until 1948, when it was reinstated (Bethel 1978 and 1991; Wisdom 1985; Rommen 2011). Bahamians greeted the return of Junkanoo with great enthusiasm: streets designed to hold only a few hundred people were drawing crowds of up to 5,000. When it became clear that most of the rushers were participating without a disguise, a serious effort toward organization and regulation took place, in order to craft the kind of spectacle the government and ruling classes needed for tourists. The Citizen’s Masquerade committee (as it was renamed) took charge of the reordering, which included police presence during the parade, and guidelines that required individuals to wear costumes.

In addition to these external pressures, there were internal motivations for change. One of these saw the introduction of women to Bay Street. While there is some contradiction over the dates, there is agreement that Maureen “Bahama Mama” DuValier was responsible for this shift. In a 1989 interview DuValier declared that in 1942 or 1943, when she was “sixteen – no, seventeen – [she] took a group [of women] to Bay Street.” She also describes having male musicians in the back line (Sands 1989:

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40 The lyrics to “Goin’ Down Burma Road” were “Burma Road declare war on da Conchy Joe/ Do nigger, don’t lick nobody, don’t lick nobody” (Craton and Saunders 1998: 288; Bethel 1991: 73). I have never heard this song nor was I able to find a transcript of it. Bahamian musician Ronnie Butler has a popular song called “Goin’ Down Burma Road,” but this is a medley of Bahamian songs, and includes a monologue on his life growing up as a “native son,” so is likely a far cry from the original (Ronnie and the Ramblers 1997).
However, based on the fact that Junkanoo was banned from Bay Street for most of the 1940s, it seems more likely this happened in the 1950s. Wisdom describes a group named the Mexicans, led by David Kemp, Bruce Beneby, and DuValier, coming to Bay Street on Boxing Day in 1954. They were organized, uniformly costumed musicians and dancers, comprised of eighteen men and fifteen women, with the women performing solely as dancers (1985: 47; cf. Bethel 1991; Rommen 2011). Yet, based on an interview Rommen uncovered between DuValier and Nassau Guardian Lifestyle in January 2004, he records her bringing a group of 25 women to Bay Street in 1958. These women were dressed in red and black, the same colors worn by the Mexicans (2011: 150).

Whatever the exact date, and whether DuValier spearheaded women’s involvement in the Mexicans or led them alone afterward, it was a turning point in Junkanoo history. Before that time, “You could find women that went one, one [i.e., alone]; maybe a woman would go with her husband,” but generally they were absent from the parade (Sands 1989: 95). Many parents did not think Junkanoo was appropriate for their children either, allowing them to watch the masqueraders going to and from the parade, but prohibiting them from going to Bay Street alone (Wisdom 1985: 42). DuValier, however, explained that she had been participating in Junkanoo since she was a girl of six or seven, in the company of her uncle and that people thought she was a boy. In spite of this, she remembered that people “weren’t shocked at all” when she brought women to Bay Street. This was likely because she was a nightclub entertainer, and “a large percentage of women that were on Bay Street” did shows with her too (Sands 1989: 96).

Other aspects of the Mexicans’ performance were historic moments for Junkanoo. Their parade model spread quickly, and a number of organized groups started appearing in Junkanoo. All forms of scrap materials were abandoned in favor
of fringed crepe paper, cardboard, and chicken wire, and groups color coded their costumes. Moreover, preparation became more elaborate and secretive. Tension developed between these groups and those individuals that preferred the freedom of rushing without conforming to particular regulations. The term “scrap” emerged to describe “a group or an individual who spends very little time in preparation of [their] Junkanoo costume” (Wisdom 1985: 48). The gap between organized and scrap groups widened as competition between organized groups grew fiercer, and the amount of preparation and skill required for their performances increased. “After the 1950’s scrappers came to symbolize ‘traditional,’ i.e. non-differentiated Bahamian Junkanoo” (ibid).

Complementing the establishment of organized groups was an increased awareness of performance for spectators. Groups of nightclub entertainers would go to Bay Street directly after their shows, and dancing for the crowd began to accompany the tradition of rushing (Bethel 1991). Rommen writes that Junkanoo was becoming understood as a “broadly Bahamian activity,” and Bethel notes that Junkanoo was changing “from a festival in which all were free to take part into a folklore show put on by performers for an audience” (Rommen 2011: 145; Bethel 1991: 80). This was augmented by the first installation, in 1966, of barriers between rushers and spectators (Wisdom 1985: 50).

In the 1950s and 1960s the groups grew larger so that singing – once a hallmark of the parades⁴ – was no longer possible. By 1976, melodies returned, this time on brass instruments. The Music Makers were responsible for this innovation, and won a prize that year for their creative arrangement. After the Music Makers, other groups incorporated brass instruments into their ensembles, including

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⁴ Songs reflected what life was like at the time. During Prohibition, for example, “Neeley, Your Rum So Sweet” was popular. The song “Do A’Nanny” was written after the burning of the Hotel Colonial (Bethel 1991).
trumpets, trombones and sousaphones. In the 1970s musicians played traditional Junkanoo songs, but beginning in the 1980s, North American and Caribbean tunes, movie soundtracks, pop songs, and soca, were also adopted. As the music became even more elaborately arranged and organized the Ministry of Tourism created a Best Music award category (Rommen 2011; cf. Wood 1995).

In 1973, the PLP ushered The Bahamas into independence. Leading up to this moment, the government and the people were working to articulate a uniquely Bahamian identity to help guide them in the postcolonial era. Rommen explains that the “euphoria of independence was paralleled by a growing desire for an articulated and visible postcolonial identity,” and that Junkanoo was “seized upon and rapidly pressed into service as a central and defining symbol of Bahamianness” (1999: 74, 75). Part of this project involved cementing Junkanoo’s position in the center of the nation’s activities, rather than at the periphery. It was granted the status of “national artistic treasure,” and the Ministry of Tourism absorbed the Masquerade Committee into its portfolio. Prime Minister Pindling began rushing at every Junkanoo parade, which further legitimized Junkanoo, demonstrating that every Bahamian, regardless of class, could participate (Wisdom 1985: 52; Rommen 1999).

Claiming Junkanoo as a Bahamian heritage activity involved selective forgetting of the pan-Caribbean nature of its history. This is perfectly demonstrated through a statement made by DuValier, who proclaimed that Junkanoo is “[Bahamians’] culture. We were born into this, and we are the only people in this whole world that can boast Junkanoo, you know” (Sands 1989: 97). Many Bahamians, both in the media and in private conversations, echo this sentiment. Junkanoo is considered the sole, unique, cultural heritage and property of the nation.

More specific than a broadly Bahamian heritage activity, Junkanoo became a symbol of Afro-Bahamian heritage activity. Embracing the African roots of Junkanoo
involved another selective forgetting, this time of the European aspects of its history. As Rommen notes, the “use of brass instruments betrays the obvious influence of British brass bands on the music but does not seem to figure in a Bahamian understanding of the music” (2011: 77). This omission points to, and reinforces, Bahamians’ understanding of themselves as a “Black Bahamas,” an idea that came about through the political maneuvering of the PLP.

Although the PLP was founded on the principle of giving a voice to all of the underserved in Bahamian society, over time, and with the addition of darker skinned members, the party objectives shifted towards a racial orientation. This resulted in the fashioning of a “Black Bahamas,” a term coined by Maria Lee (2012) for her thesis on the development of the racialized framing of what it means to be Bahamian. She defines “Black Bahamas” as “a cultural framework that discounts citizenship as a definitive marker of Bahamian national identity” (2012: 5). Instead, only those members of society with darker skin are considered authentic Bahamians.

Lee explains that the PLP built support for their party by illustrating the political, economic and social domination of the Bay Street Boys as a system akin to slavery. Although there was definitely racist discrimination and oppression with Bay Street in power, it was never legislated in explicitly racial terms. There were a few darker skinned Bahamian men who owned property and thus were able to vote, hold positions in the House of Assembly, and otherwise exercise some agency over their lives. It was the PLP who made the racial hierarchies explicit through their election campaigns. Beginning in 1967, and continuing throughout their twenty-five years in power, they reminded the Bahamian public of the slave-master relationship between the lighter skinned UBP and the darker-skinned majority.\footnote{Their racialized campaign rhetoric was maintained throughout their time in power and intensified in election years. First, they added the biblical narrative of Exodus. Pindling was cast as Black Moses, leading Bahamians out of slavery from their Bay Street masters. Next, the sole, state-owned television station was used to broadcast the television miniseries \textit{Roots} and the 1956 movie \textit{The Ten}} Junkanoo, with its roots in
slavery once made explicit in negative terms, came to symbolize a positive aspect of Bahamian identity because of its link to a Black Bahamas.43

**Junkanoo Today**

Junkanoo has been wholeheartedly embraced by Bahamians, and is celebrated across the archipelago. Even if a person does not participate in the parade, they likely have an affiliation to one of the major groups. “Everybody! – just as much as a political party if not more so – every Bahamian is either a Saxon, or a Valley, or maybe a Roots or Colors [or One Family]. Everybody!” Schoolchildren learn to play the trumpet, the trombone, the sousaphone, and the drums, just so that they can participate in Junkanoo. Similarly, members of the Police Band and the Defence Force Band are also part of the groups’ bands (personal conversation with Carol Misiewicz, March 22, 2015).

The Junkanoo season begins on April 1,44 and preparations take place in warehouse-like buildings known as shacks. These are located in lower-income communities, and are a definite source of pride for their residents. Moreover, they

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43 In addition to ensuring that the electorate would vote for their party over the UBP, the PLP’s campaigning created an in-group out-group consciousness among dark skinned Bahamians, and subsumed the face of lighter-skinned Bahamians under the majority of darker-skinned Bahamians. With such vigorous efforts it is understandable that Bahamians have largely accepted and internalized the “Black Bahamas” idea. Although it has been twenty-three years since Pindling was in office, successive governments have continued to reinforce the idea of a Black Bahamas. This is seen for example in the language they use to describe Bahamians, some of the cultural programmes they come up with, and the way they advertise these programmes. Essentially, all other minority groups in the country – for example Anglo, Chinese, Indian, Lebanese, Greek – are forgotten when it promotes initiatives that focus on our African heritage, and use language that makes it seem as though this is the only one that Bahamians lay claim to. The media, and many Bahamians themselves, reproduce this notion, by emphasising darker-skinned people as “true-true” Bahamians.

44 This date is according to the Junkanoo Corporation of New Providence’s (JCNP) calendar, which runs from April 1 to March 31. When I spoke with Dr. Linda Moxey-Brown, Director of Culture, she told me the government’s country-wide Junkanoo period runs from July to July (interview with author, July 24, 2014). This discrepancy has to do with differing fiscal calendars. Silbert Ferguson, chairperson of the JCNP, told me that his organization chose its season to ensure that its financials can be included in the government’s budget (email communication with author, April 2015).
help to recruit younger residents, who walk past the shacks, see individuals working on pieces and watch them develop:

And that’s what makes [them] want to take on this mantle of a Junkanooer ‘cause it’s rooted in [their] everyday existence. If you live in Mason’s Edition [home of the Saxons Superstars] you walk past the Junkanoo shack when you go to school. You see it when it’s empty and you can anticipate when it’s gonna come alive. Just like, you know, the seasons are coming. Or like, you know, when mango season is coming. You can feel Junkanoo season is coming. It’s like a part of nature. (personal conversation with Maxwell Poitier, March 31, 2015)

The anticipation for the Junkanoo parades begins as soon as the results have been announced for the last parade of the season (New Year’s Day). Judges are culled from the general public, and groups are assessed on their overall performance, music, choreographed dance, overall costume, and the execution of their theme. Prizes are also awarded to the best lead costume, free dancer, and performance on Shirley Street – the second part of the parade route (Junkanoo Corporation New Providence Ltd. 2006; The Tribune 2014l). Boxing Day is the most prestigious of the two parades, although they are both highly competitive, and winning both of them is considered a feat. Groups have become so large they have been separated into categories – A and B are for the larger groups, with other categories for individuals, exhibition groups, and scrap groups. Competition is fiercest between the A groups, and winners earn bragging rights for the year. It is not uncommon for members and supporters of rival groups to get into arguments (good-natured and otherwise) about who should have won and who is going to win a title in the upcoming parades throughout this year.

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45 This is the descriptor for solo dancers whose routine is not choreographed.
As participants and costumes have grown in number and size, the parade has grown to accommodate these changes. In the earliest days the route ran both east and west along Bay Street, allowing for participants to clash – musically and otherwise – as they passed one another. In 1973 it was made one-way and traced a square around two blocks. Now, it is the shape of a rectangle and traces four blocks. In the early and mid 20th century the parade started around 3am, but now it begins at 1am (or 2am on New Year's Day) and continues until 10 or 11 o'clock in the morning, and on rare occasions – because of a late start or poor organization – as late as noon.

The parade is ticketed and seats range in cost, with the most expensive seats being in Rawson and Parliament Squares, at the center of Bay Street. Unlike other places along the parade route, without a ticket it is impossible to be physically present in the squares, thus restricting this location to VIP’s, people with a connection to VIP’s, and others who are able to spend the money for a premium ticket. Wooden bleachers and ticketed seating was introduced to Junkanoo in the 1980s. Gradually the number of seats was expanded, and the government switched to aluminum bleachers, although many people stand and watch or roam the streets while the parade is happening.

It is no longer possible to spontaneously join the parade on Bay Street. Nowadays, even people that want to participate with the minimal amount of preparation have to be organized and sanctioned in advance. While scrap groups are much more relaxed and have less elaborate costumes, themes, and/or organization, they are often better dressed and have more thought-out appearances than their name may lead one to assume. As far as themes are concerned, both organized and scrap groups represent issues going on in our local and global community, though it seems smaller groups are more likely to make political or controversial statements.

The largest groups have several hundred members, and they switch out in the middle of the parade to make sure that the group appears fresh and full of energy for the entirety of the route.
The Music

Leroy “Tinkle” Hanna, Bahamian musician and long time member of the Valley Boys, the first official Junkanoo group, describes Junkanoo as “above all else, a rhythm” (Rommen 2000: 78). Drums provide the foundation of this rhythm, and these are divided into three groups – lead, second, and bass. Traditionally, only goombay drums were used, but beginning in 1985 the tenor drum from the drumkit replaced goombay drums in the lead line. Known as the tom-tom, its higher pitch allows it to be heard above the goombay drums, and unlike an animal hide drum it stays in tune throughout the parade and does not need to be heated. Both kinds of drums are played from underneath one arm, and kept in place by a strap which slings over the opposite shoulder. The lead and second groups have interlocking patterns, although the lead usually plays the more complex of the two. The bass line, provided by 55-gallon cow skin drums – also played under the arm – carries the pulse of the music (Wood 1995; Y. Justilien 2004). The following is a transcript of the “Over-the-Hill” beat, a traditional rhythm used by rushers as they were moving from the Over-the-Hill area of New Providence to Bay Street.

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67 The Valley Boys were formed by a group of high school students in 1958. Their leader was Winston “Gus” Cooper (Wood 1995: 86; Rommen 2011: 151).
This slower beat has been replaced in contemporary Junkanoo music by faster compositions. In addition to the drums, conch shells, bicycle horns, black horns, bugles, whistles, and various kinds of cowbells – double, triple, and double-headed – are played. With the exception of the cowbells, these instruments are used more for their timbral qualities and act as percussive accents. Drums, horns, bells, and whistles all contribute to the composite rhythm of Junkanoo. The brass section incorporates all melodic horns, whether or not they would technically be considered brass instruments. They most commonly include trumpets, trombones, tubas, sousaphones, and trumpets; some groups also include saxophones and clarinets (Wood 1995; Y. Justilien 2004; Rommen 2011).48

Junkanoo stirs intense positive feelings in Bahamians, participants and spectators alike. Another important aspect of the sounds of the parade is the call and response that occurs between performers and audience. The larger, older groups all have specific cheers, which they use to engage the crowd and excite their supporters. A classic Valley Boys call is as follows:

Leader: Who are we?
Response: The Valley!!

And a newer one introduced in 2012:

Altogether: Ohhh, dey scared dey scared! The Valley Boys comin the Valley Boys comin!

The Roots are another well-established large group. Their classic call is as follows:

Leader: Who’s in da mornin’?
Response: Roots!!

A more popular call is:

Leader: Roots!
Response: Deh it is! 49

Because of the rivalry between the Valley Boys and the Saxons, Valley supporters will not participate in the call for the Saxons and vice versa. The Roots and One Family, however, have a more neutral position, and it is more likely to have wide crowd participation in their calls. More than rousing the audience, these calls allow every participant to make noise. In moments of great excitement, audience members will get on their feet and stomp on the bleachers to augment the sounds of their voices. Oftentimes, group supporters in a crowd will shout when they see or hear their group coming towards them. Spectators may also whistle or shout if they want to show support to any group that is currently in front of them. Another time

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49 I have personally witnessed these over the course of my life (cf. Wood 1995).
audience members make noise is when they sing along to the tunes played by the Junkanoo bands. These participatory avenues fold everyone into a community.

Maureen DuValier described Junkanoo as “the time when Bahamians are most happy, most happy...Junkanoo to the Bahamians is the time to embrace and be happy with each other and anyone else that comes down – every person, stranger or not. You’re just like one happy family” (Sands 1989: 106-107). Beyond the nation-building work that it does in the moment, these relational feelings are carried throughout the year for people who rush. In 2010, Bank of The Bahamas provided sponsorship to each of the category A groups. At the formal donation event, group leaders shared stories of the deep ties formed in Junkanoo communities. William Brown, former chairperson of the Music Makers, explained he had “inherited new caps. [He was] a guidance counselor, marriage counselor and detective.” He was also “baffled at what [they] are committed to. It’s far more than a parade. It’s a social phenomenon of helping families, neighborhoods and children” (The Tribune 2010). Junkanoo creates intense feelings of community on the nights of the parades, and the long preparation and close collaboration required for a successful appearance help to sustain the functionality and service of this community for individuals throughout the year.

Despite the overwhelmingly positive spirit that Bahamians create and sustain during Junkanoo times, a closer analysis reveals that even in the parade, social relationships are far from perfect. In many ways, Junkanoo is a compact reproduction of the norms and values of Bahamian society. Seating is a clear example of class hierarchies. Gender, class, and race issues are demonstrated in the preparation for and organization of the parade. Choreographed dancers are almost exclusively women. The only exception is for men who perform as free dancers, with flair for the dramatic and whose purpose is to draw attention to themselves; there is usually only
one of these, if any, per group. Musicians, especially drummers, are almost exclusively male, though recently, women have made inroads into the various sections.

Although these distinctions are easily observed, they are not discussed openly. As Tinkle Hanna explained, the topic is “extremely controversial and … no junkanooer would acknowledge that there are class distinctions in Junkanoo” (Rommen 1999: 90). Keeping silent about issues surrounding Junkanoo itself is in contrast to the ways the parade was used as a form of protest against the government. Bahamians’ willingness to address the government and unwillingness to look inward at the issues in Junkanoo is perhaps because those issues are too personal, and acknowledging them would disrupt the otherwise unifying function of the parade.

Gradually, sounds (and sights) of Junkanoo have moved beyond the prescribed limits of parade times. For example, “kalik” is the onomatopoeic word for the sound made by the cowbells. It has become integrated into popular culture, and is the name for a favorite, locally made beer, used for the chorus of a pop song about Junkanoo, and was the name for a now-closed restaurant. Seeing or hearing “kalik” calls to mind the entire festival of Junkanoo in the minds of Bahamians. Thus, the full sounding (seeing and feeling) of the parade has been collapsed into this one word. This also demonstrates the force of the Junkanoo in the community, since even in its translation to writing it retains its ability to emphasize the identity of Bahamians. Similarly, Junkanoo Punch and Junkanoo Champagne are the names of local sodas that capitalize on the meanings of Junkanoo.

Many public and private schools incorporate Junkanoo performance education into their curriculum. This happens to varying degrees. At some schools, students create their own simple costumes, for example pasting crepe paper onto old

50 “Rushin Through the Crowd” by Exuma, on his Reincarnation (1972) album.
clothes – reminiscent of the first Junkanoo costumes – and then have small “rush outs” on school grounds. At others, education is more elaborate, and students prepare for Junior Junkanoo. Although Bahamians of all ages can and do participate in the traditional Junkanoo parade, Junior Junkanoo, created specifically for students, was introduced by the government in 1987. The New Providence parade happens once a year in December, two weeks the senior event on Boxing Day. There are categories to encompass every stage of schooling, from toddlers in preschool to 12th graders in high school. Junior Junkanoo is very successful, drawing large crowds and encouraging competition almost as fierce as that of the senior parade, especially among high school students. There are also Junior Junkanoo parades on other islands in the archipelago.

Hotel restaurants and other local eateries that see a lot of tourist traffic have also adopted Junkanoo to infuse local culture into their services, thus helping guests feel as though they are getting a truly Bahamian experience. This most often manifests itself in Junkanoo renditions – with and without costumes – of the happy birthday song for celebrating patrons. Some hotels also have small rush outs for their visitors. The biggest example of this is Atlantis, which hosts a weekly rush out through the Marina Village district of their resort.

In yet another example, Junkanoo can be heard at sporting events locally and internationally. It is customary for costumed Junkanooers to appear and perform at competitions hosted locally, like the Caribbean Free Trade Association (CARIFTA) Swimming Games, or the International Amateur Athletics Federation (IAAF) World Relays. The government also sends Junkanoo groups to cheer on Bahamian athletes at the Olympics, the World Games and other international competitions. Bahamians in the diaspora also perform Junkanoo at various carnivals, like Caribana in Toronto.
The Cost

Presently, the cost of Junkanoo is shared by The Bahamas government, the Junkanoo Corporation of New Providence, Junkanoo groups, corporate sponsors, and individual participants. Bahamian anthropologist Nicolette Bethel recently led a research project (2009-2013) into the economic impact of Junkanoo. Bethel and her students at the College of The Bahamas gathered qualitative and quantitative data, through, inter alia, crowd counting at Boxing and New Year's Day parades, interviews with stakeholders regarding the economic impact of Junkanoo, ethnographic studies of the shacks where preparations for the parades take place, surveying Bahamians about their attendance at and satisfaction with Junkanoo parades, and surveying tourist attendance and awareness of the parade. Their findings reveal that while the aforementioned groups all invest a considerable amount into the production of Junkanoo each year, they do so at an economic loss (Bethel 2014).

The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture is responsible for preparing and administering the parade route and providing the seed funding to Junkanoo groups throughout The Bahamas. Based on their official expenses, Bethel conservatively estimates that this costs the public over $2 million per year. She points out as well that materials used for Junkanoo costumes and instruments for Junkanoo musicians are imported duty-free, and this loss of tax revenue is not included in the $2 million dollar estimate (2014: 18).

The Junkanoo Corporation of New Providence (JCNP) is responsible for administering the parades and awarding the $350,000 in prize money to winning groups. Including legal and accounting fees, and the costs for ticketing, parade personnel on Bay Street, stipends, and the awards banquet, the JCNP’s expenses total a little over half a million dollars (Bethel 2014: 19).
Bethel’s research focused on the A and B category groups. In 2009, A groups reported spending anywhere from $60,000 to $350,000, although the average cost was $150,000. B groups reported spending around $30,000. The total estimated costs to the six A and eight B groups participating in 2012 was about $1,140,000. Individual groups also receive corporate sponsorships to help fund their preparations. The amounts reported by the five groups that volunteered their receipts ranged from $25,000 to $180,000 (2014: 20-21).

Studies of groups also have to include the labor that happens in their shacks, which is borne by individual participants. Using conservative estimates – $10 an hour over 20 hour work weeks,\(^5\) and assuming a preparation period of 17 weeks – Bethel and her team estimated the labor at $10,880,000 per year in New Providence alone (2014: 20).

Participants have to do more than just craft their costumes, however. The group provides them with the materials to create the base structure of their costumes – like crepe paper, styrofoam, cardboard – but they have to purchase all of the supplementary materials, and any “tricks” – the word used to describe the decorations – on their own. These range in cost from decorative mirrors - $1.99 for 10 – to construction rods – $500 for 60 pieces.\(^6\) The team conducted a survey to find out how far participants were willing to invest their personal finances into their costumes, and discovered that 65% of the respondents would spend whatever was necessary, and 35% would spend up to $1,500. The latter group was willing to use 3-7 weeks pay on their costumes (2014: 20-21).

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\(^5\) This was based off of their observations in a B group shack. A group members spend anywhere from 8 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week, in the roughly four months of preparations for the parades (Bethel 2014: 20).

\(^6\) All of these materials must be imported, in contrast to earlier costumes that were made from items either found at home or readily available locally. Not only is this a reflection of the commercialization of Junkanoo, but also of The Bahamas’ primarily service-based economy, which results in a heavy reliance on imports.
In assessing the overall cost of producing Junkanoo, based on their conservative figures (and less than full participation in reporting expenses), Bethel estimates that $18 to $19 million are invested each season. This begs the question of revenue, which is received primarily through ticket sales (2014: 21). The seating prices and sales revenue varied over the years, but at this time premium tickets for the senior parade are $45, and the least expensive seats are $5. Bethel and her team counted the crowd during the 2009-2010 season and estimated about 13,000 people. With a median ticket price of $25, this translates to about $325,000 in revenue, a mere 2% of the cost of putting on the parades. This low number becomes particularly more shocking in light of the fact that Bethel reveals over a third of surveyed individuals were willing to pay more than $45 for their ticket (2014: 24).

Notably, the majority of tickets are bought by Bahamians. Through communicating with then Director General of Tourism, Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, Bethel discovered that the Ministry of Tourism does not find it necessary to advertise Junkanoo to tourists, since it happens during the peak season when hotels are generally operating at 100% occupancy (2014: 15). In a study of 197 tourists done in 2010, Bethel and her team found that 35% of them had heard of Junkanoo, and 9% had attended the parades (2014: 22). This is a small survey size, considering the millions of tourists that visit The Bahamas each year, but any casual observer on Bay or Shirley Street would confirm its findings. Junkanoo is an event attended overwhelmingly by Bahamians.

Crowd counting in the 2012-2013 season revealed 76% seat occupancy, which Bethel notes as a positive, since attendance at another cultural festival, Shakespeare-in-Paradise, is around 60-65%. Junkanoo is a popular event, and the absence of tourists

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30% were willing to pay up to $10, 37% up to $25, 25% up to $50 and 8% up to 100 for tickets (Bethel 2014: 22). The surveyed individuals were primarily people between the ages of 18 and 34, though the results came primarily from female college-aged students (ibid: 16-17).
indicates a great source of untapped revenue, even if the government only aimed to
gather enough people to fill the remaining 24% of seats (Bethel 2014). In an interview
with a local newspaper, Bethel explained that although Junkanoo is used to market
The Bahamas, it is not marketed in and of itself to tourists. She advocated rectifying
this difference, and capitalizing on the spike in arrivals after Boxing Day to help fill
seats at the New Year’s parade, which traditionally has lower attendance. She also
advocated charging tourists more than Bahamians, “because they don’t have the
opportunity to see it more than once, and they will pay” (Lampkin-Dhillon 2014d).

Although direct investors operate at a loss, other people and organizations
outside of the Junkanoo community habitually make a profit. During the time
leading up to the parades, stores specializing in Junkanoo materials or musical
instruments, and welders who are hired to make bells, all increase their revenue.
Once groups begin practicing, individuals are free to set up concession stands, and
make money by selling refreshments to performers and audience members. The
nation’s only private cable company, Cable Bahamas, earned $97,632 during the 2008-
2009 season from Junkanoo advertising. On the parade days, vendors can make large
sums from refreshment sales. They pay a small fee to the Ministry of Youth, Sports,
and Culture – $100 p/day or $200 p/season – and can erect a stall along the parade
route. One woman reported making a total of $9,413 over the two day period in 2009-
2010, which, when compared to the average annual wage of $23,751, is about four to
five months’ salary (Bethel 2014: 23).

In her interview with the newspaper, Bethel urged Junkanoo administrators to
make practices ticketed events. Presently, attendance at practices is free, which means
that while vendors make money, the groups themselves do not reap financial
benefits. She also advocated charging Bahamians more for their tickets to the
parades, since it “does not make economic sense” that prices are capped at numbers lower than people are willing to pay (Lampkin-Dhillon 2014d).

Bethel’s research demonstrates in clear terms the way Junkanoo parades are viewed “as celebratory competitions rather than engines of economic activity” (2014: 15). Furthermore, “Despite considerable discussion and still-born projects, none of the current government investment in Junkanoo seeks to build economic capacity for its practitioners” (ibid).

With figures such as the ones presented in Bethel’s article, and Junkanoo’s clear financial potential, it becomes even more confusing that Prime Minister Christie looked outside of the country for a solution to the economic slump, and the still-lagging summer season for the tourism industry. When compared with the Development Board’s active engagement in Junkanoo in the mid-twentieth century, his decision seems even stranger. On the other hand, the fact that Bahamians appear to have been investing blindly into the production of Junkanoo is a demonstration of the significant intangible returns from the festival.

Junkanoo is part of the world that Bahamians interact with on a regular basis. Through a combination of its psychological and social functions, it continues to be an integral part of being Bahamian. Although it has been used to promote the tourism industry in the past, it appears that it has escaped further commercialization only by chance. At this moment, efforts are being made to combine Bahamian cultural heritage with foreign festival traditions in order to promote The Bahamas to tourists. The results of these efforts are explored further in the next chapter.
The Shape of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival

As I write this chapter, the countdown to the inaugural Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival is on. The website for the carnival is keeping track of the days, hours, minutes, and seconds until April 17, 2015, the day of the first major event. The road to carnival began two years ago, and it has been tumultuous ever since its announcement. This chapter describes the introduction of carnival to the Bahamian public, explains its structure and projected financial benefits, and reviews the positive reactions of the public.

Announcement to the Public

In May 2013, not long after returning from a visit to Trinidad, Prime Minister Perry Christie announced during the 2013-2014 budget communication that the government had allocated $1 million to a festival that would create a “burst of entrepreneurship” from cultural tourism. Christie, leader of the PLP, said, “We begin, through public and private sector partnerships, work on the development of a major, week-long national cultural festival oriented to the start of the Lenten season. This will mark the start of the Bahamian Carnival or Mardi Gras.” He said that the festival was targeted for launch in 2015, and “could incorporate a cultural village, public processions and song and costume competitions.” He went on to suggest that the larger Junkanoo groups, like the Saxons and the Valley Boys, could become corporate entities, and make money from selling costumes locally and internationally. There would be stipulations that a certain percentage of these costumes be made from local materials, like straw and sisal, which would in turn stimulate those industries. As for the specific areas of entrepreneurship, Christie cited costume design and creation;
writing and performance of music, dance, and choreography; visual arts; lighting and stage design, as well as legislation to protect the intellectual property coming from these developments. He also said, “We believe that this stimulus to Bahamian music, art, entertainment and other cultural forms will reap inestimable rewards for generations to come” (McKenzie 2013).

Following the Prime Minister’s announcement, The Nassau Guardian, a local daily, spoke to well-known members of the arts and culture community. Arlene Nash-Ferguson, Junkanoo enthusiast and author of I Come to Get Me (2000), a colorful description of the contemporary Junkanoo parade, welcomed Christie’s announcement, but stressed that the carnival has to be “uniquely Bahamian.” She said, “We have a very rich culture and it needs to be exposed to the fullest. As a tourist destination, we need to ensure that when our visitors come to The Bahamas, they leave having had a uniquely Bahamian experience. I know there are festivals around the world and it’s okay borrowing good ideas but when all is said and done, it must have a uniquely Bahamian stamp on it” (Adderley 2013).

Erica Wells, editor of The Nassau Guardian, reported on a conversation with Bahamian artist Antonius Roberts about the Prime Minister’s announcement. According to Wells, Roberts said establishing “the kind of Bahamian Mardi Gras the government announced […] will require a shift in the thinking of Junkanoo leaders” (Wells 2013a). While Roberts thinks the creation of a carnival is a step in the right direction, he said Junkanoo leaders will have to “embrace opportunities to transform the art of Junkanoo into the business of Junkanoo, without compromising tradition and cultural identity.” Roberts went on to say that the carnival could be a good thing, as long as the celebrations are not only focused on Bay Street, and concentrate on an interdisciplinary cultural explosion in every park and on every block (ibid).
Five months after Christie’s announcement, the Bahamas National Festival Commission (BNFC) was launched. Chaired by Paul Major, a former banker, with Arlene Nash-Ferguson as Chief Administrator of the Festival Commission Secretariat, the Commission is made of twenty-three Bahamians. It includes representatives from the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry Finance, and the Office of the Attorney General, as well as the vice-presidents of Kerzner International and Baha Mar. Respected artists and professionals from the community are also on the Commission, including Antonius Roberts. Technical resources are provided by veteran Junkanooers, including Percy “Vola” Francis, leader of the Saxons and often referred to as the King of Junkanoo (Christie 2013; cf. The Tribune 2013b).

According to the Prime Minister’s press release, the Commission was “given the mandate to conceptualize, organize and launch a National Festival that will seek to embrace Bahamian culture and endeavor to encompass the entire Bahamas in such a manner that would stimulate sustainable economic opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).”\textsuperscript{54} The statement continues: “The goal of this economically driven undertaking is to ultimately expand the Bahamian economy by creating opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship by promoting the participation of Bahamians and visitors in the Festival through the sale of costumes, musical performances, other forms of entertainment, arts, crafts, cuisine and any other creative saleable art form.” Christie concludes by expressing confidence in the Commission to produce a carnival that “would place The Bahamas high up on the annual calendar of world renowned Festivals” (Christie 2013).

\textsuperscript{54} There was no clarification in the release or from the BNFC as to what is considered an SME, a category that can be defined based on a company’s financial assets or number of employees (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development 2015). The designation varies across countries, and there is no standard definition for SMEs in The Bahamas (conversation with Nadia Williams at the Bahamas Chamber of Commerce, April 2015).
Components and Organization

With 18 months to create the carnival, the BNFC started working right away, beginning with competitions for a name and a logo announced in December 2013. There were 43 entrants to the name competition, which was open to schools throughout the country, and two students from a primary school in New Providence independently submitted the same winning entry: Bahamas Carnival. There were no awards in the logo category (The Tribune 2014a).

Figure 4. Music Masters competition flier, from Nicolls 2014
The logo and name competitions were followed by a song competition, launched at the end of April 2014. The Commission invited all singers, songwriters, musicians, and producers to enter up to 3 songs at a fee of $25 per song. Among the rules governing the competition was one that stipulated entries have Bahamian characteristics and evoke Bahamian rhythms and flavor. Another stated the songs had to be “memorable with popular and emotional appeal” (The Tribune 2014e). Well-known musician Freddie Munnings Jr., member of the BNFC, explained, “We know that we have talented and professional musicians, songwriters and producers and we also know that they, for the most part, struggle to economically sustain themselves because of lack of exposure to their material and talent. We are hoping to provide the stage and opportunity for our music industry as never seen before” (Jones Jr. 2014).

The first phase of the competition was open for 3 months, during which time the Commission amassed 170 entries. Of these, they whittled the number down to 25 songs by 19 artists. These songs were placed on a compilation CD Jump in Da Line!, produced by veteran local musician Fred Ferguson. The BNFC released Jump in Da Line! in November 2014 at a party held in Club Aura, Atlantis (The Tribune 2014j). Chairman Paul Major said that these artists would “gain significant exposure” locally and internationally “as the Commission [would] see to it that the 25 top songs from the song competition are played on US radio stations with high listenership from the Caribbean diaspora” (The Tribune 2014d). On April 17, 2015 the 19 artists will compete on stage during the semi-finals in Freeport, Grand Bahama, as part of the events leading up to the carnival activities on New Providence. Artists of the top 10 songs will perform in one of the signature events of carnival on New Providence, with the winner receiving a $20,000 cash prize. Other finalists will also be rewarded: the first runner up with $12,500, second runner up with $7,500, third runner up with $4,000, and remaining finalists each with $1,000 (Jones Jr. 2014).
Many Bahamian musicians responded favorably to the competition, expressing the idea that it was about more than just the potential for their individual benefit, but for the Bahamian music industry as a whole. In an interview with *The Tribune*, female singer Wendi Lewis, for example, was happy about the opportunity to promote women in an industry that is male-dominated (2014c). Dillon “D-MAC” McKenzie, a producer and artist, said the competition provided a platform to explore the question about what Bahamian music really is (ibid). Veteran musician Geno-D echoed this sentiment: “On the international stage we are competing with other countries that have a definitive sound and we need to have our own unique sound. With the song competition we have a greater opportunity to brand our sound to the world” (ibid).

D-MAC and Geno-D put their fingers on one of the key objectives of the Festival Commission. In an interview with Arlene Nash-Ferguson, she told me: “The whole idea is to get Bahamian music out there…this is really an attempt to get Bahamian music exposed to the world…that’s one of the underlying purposes of the carnival” (interview with author, June 18, 2014). The next part of our interview is worth quoting at length:

My personal feeling is […] because we are so small, and because we are in the shadows of several cultural giants, in terms of the countries that are around us, my feeling is that we have to make a deliberate and conscious effort to preserve those things that we have developed uniquely from other places. And so Bahamian music needs to have a shot in the arm. We need to define what it is, we need to decide what sound we want to take to the world and then we need to figure out how we are going to get it there. And I think this is the beginning of that kind of movement to stimulate our songwriters and our musicians to start to create a body of work that we can carry to the world and as time goes on I think just like reggae and soca and dancehall and whatnot Bahamian music will have its own individual stamp.

The CEO of the BNFC, Roscoe Dames, commented on the importance of the competition to the carnival at the CD launch: “Music is the spirit that drives the
cultural experience of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival. Therefore, it was essential to find talented Bahamians who were able to capture the vibrant energy and legacy of our traditional music. This album will set a precedent for many to come and will allow our culture and talent to be exposed globally” (*The Tribune* 2014j). The music from the compilation album can be heard on the BNFC’s website, www.bahamasjunkanoocarnival.com, which is also where details about each aspect of the carnival can be found.55

The carnival is no longer oriented toward the start of the Lenten season, but is being described as a “festive springtime occasion for Bahamians and visitors to ‘Let Loose after Lent.’” The decision to push the carnival back “was taken after examining the tourist seasons – the months of April and May are part of a slower season for the economy. September and October, which are the other slow tourism months, were ruled out because it is typically the height of the hurricane season” (*The Tribune* 2014d). The “Collage of Culture” will be a “collection of celebrations, concerts, cultural shows and street parades that pull from all aspects of culture and heritage.” On their website, on promotional and informational materials, and in interviews, the BNFC repeatedly states that carnival is not a singular parade, but a season. Moreover, it declares: “The calendar will be filled up with private events, so there is nonstop entertainment for five weeks” (Bahamas National Festival Commission 2014b).

According to the website’s event calendar, the season opens on Easter Monday, April 6, 2015, with the official launch at Family Island Festivals. No further information is given about this event and it has not been mentioned in promotional materials. The calendar is bare for the next seven days – presumably to be filled with private events – until April 17, the night of the first Music Masters concert in Freeport, Grand Bahama. This will be followed immediately by the Midnight Rush on

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55 All details on the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival in this chapter are from the website unless otherwise stated.
April 18, which the website describes as “The Friday Frenzy after-party for the Music Masters Concert. No costumes or organized lines needed. It is a massive street rush that will draw thousands of local Junkanoo spectators on the streets to participate in Junkanoo without the confines of competition.” The Junkanoo Carnival Beach Party takes place after the Midnight Rush, promising more music, food, and culture (although what specifically about Bahamian culture is left unsaid). The events on Grand Bahama wrap up with the second night of the Music Masters concert, beginning at 8pm on April 18, 2015.

Carnival events move to New Providence on May 7, with the opening of Da Cultural Village. Initially, there were plans for a Junior Road Fever on May 1. This children’s event was meant to showcase schools, youth groups, and marching bands performing to both live and recorded music. For whatever reason, Junior Road Fever was taken off of the calendar and replaced by the Youth Culture Fest, announced February 25, 2015. The Youth Culture Fest will showcase a parade of children creatively depicting the islands of The Bahamas through the use of indigenous materials, accompanied by live and recorded music. Their parade route covers the same area that has been chosen for the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival events, and ends at Da Cultural Village. Moreover, the Youth Culture Fest is promoted on the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival website as one of the events in the carnival season and has been featured on its Facebook page. However, when I called the Festival Commission to clarify that it was the replacement for Junior Road Fever, I ended up in an extended conversation with Youth Culture Fest’s chief administrator, Dr. Ann Higgins.

Dr. Higgins told me emphatically that Junior Road Fever and the Youth Culture Fest are not in any way linked to one another. In fact, she said that she would

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56 The idea for this event no doubt sprung from the tradition of Junior Junkanoo parades.
prefer for me not to write about the Youth Culture Fest if I am writing about the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival. She also told me that each time she was approached to do a joint promotional activity with the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, she refused (personal conversation with author, April 14, 2015). Nevertheless, I feel obligated to record the Youth Culture Fest. While Dr. Higgins says they are not related, she told me she was not responsible for the idea, which leads me to believe that there could in fact be some connection. Both events are in the same spirit – including children and doing so in a manner that is close to Bahamian heritage. Moreover, the presence of Youth Culture Fest on the event listing for the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival website would make its omission obvious and confusing. The change from Junior Road Fever to Youth Culture Fest demonstrates too the fluid and ever-shifting nature of the carnival event planning.

To return to events strictly a part of the carnival season, Da Cultural Village officially opens to the public on May 7. While Da Cultural Village will also be present on Grand Bahama, that venue is not promoted on the website in the same way as the one on New Providence. This is described as an “epicenter of culture bringing the islands of The Bahamas together, showcasing the unique offerings from each island including food, culture, arts and craft. The Cultural Village will feature multiple stages of Bahamian and international musicians. It will be an artistic mecca with poets, storytellers, visual artists, dancers, street performers and Junkanoos showcasing their talents.” The village, which will be set up in the historic areas of

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57 From our conversation it was clear that she did not want children to be associated with the aesthetic of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival. Although she did not say so explicitly, she used phrases like “when you’re dealing with children it’s very delicate,” and “keep it sanitized when it comes to children,” and referred repeatedly to being guided by her morals in her decision.

58 Moreover, although I explained at the beginning of our conversation that I was writing my thesis, at the end of our exchange Dr. Higgins wished me “all the best in your journalism.” As this is not a journalistic endeavor, I feel more comfortable including details of the Youth Culture Fest.
Clifford Park and Arawak Cay,\(^59\) will be open for several days, until the end of the carnival season (cf. Moss 2015).

The main carnival events\(^60\) begin on the night of May 7 with Junkamania, an event that will “showcase Junkanoo music and other Junkanoo inspired folk forms such as drumming and dance. Bands will perform original music” (*The Tribune* 2014d). The promotional blurb for Junkamania reads: “Feel the rhythm, the fire in ‘ya belly,’ the music of Junkanoo, the soul of our people. At Junkamania, a concert of Junkanoo orchestras, feel the beat of the drum, the heartbeat of our music and culture” (BNFC 2014c). A maximum of 50 musicians will be allowed on stage at a time, and though the main criteria is for groups to use Junkanoo instruments, they are also allowed to introduce other “instruments like the keyboard, harps, violins, vocals, so that the end result is an orchestral presentation of Junkanoo on a concert stage” (Moss 2015). The following is an excerpt of the Junkamania rules displayed on the website:

3. The group must have a music section comprised of traditional Junkanoo instruments (cowbells, goatskin drums, whistles, bugles, black horns and conch shells)

4. The groups must also be comprised of at least three of the following:
   - Rake and Scrape instruments (saw, scraper, banjo, accordion, harmonica, etc.)
   - Vocalist(s)
   - Electronic instruments (guitar, keyboard, etc.)
   - Choreographed dancers
   - Wind instruments (saxophone, clarinet, flute, oboe, recorder, bassoon, etc.)
   - Brass instruments (trumpet, trombone, tuba, etc.)
   - String instruments (violin, viola, cello, etc.)
   - Percussion instruments (conga, bongo, bell, tambourine, timbale, etc.)

\(^{59}\)Clifford Park is the historic parade ground that hosted the first independence celebration on July 10, 1973, and has continued to host anniversary festivities ever since. Named after former governor Sir Bede Clifford, the park is used for other large-scale events like political rallies. Clifford Park is on the southern side of the western end of Bay Street. On the opposite, northern side of the street is Arawak Cay. This is a boardwalk kind of area full of restaurants serving Bahamian food and drinks, frequented by locals and tourists alike. There is also a field opposite these restaurants where fairs and concerts – usually those related to Bahamian heritage and culture – are held. Directly behind Arawak Cay is the ocean, and east of the restaurants is the beach.

\(^{60}\)I describe these four as the main events because they are the ones that are advertised on printed and video promotional material.
5. All groups must register with the BNFC.
6. Groups must present a five (5) minute minimum to a ten (10) minute maximum stage performance.
7. Music presentation must have at least one song from the BNFC Song Competition Compilation CD presented for a minimum of 2 minutes.
8. Groups must be dressed in uniform.
9. The Junkanoo group’s music should have the characteristics of The Bahamas; it should evoke and celebrate Bahamian rhythms and flavor. In addition, it should be memorable with popular and emotional appeal.\footnote{Note: this is the same language that was used to set the parameters for songs submitted to the Music Masters competition.}
10. Groups which do not satisfy the above criteria and the technical specifications will be rejected.

The entry fee for Junkanoo is $50. All applications were due on or before 5:00pm, Friday January 30, 2015, but the website has no groups listed in the section reserved for their promotion.

The final Music Masters concert will happen the next night, May 8, from 8pm – 12am. This will feature the top ten artists from the Music Masters concerts in Freeport, as well as the Baha Men and Trinidadian soca musician Machel Montano.\footnote{For most of the Music Masters' promotion, a great deal of excitement was built around the fact that the headliner would be a Grammy award-winning artist. The government's bid for such an individual never materialized, however, and a considerable amount of debate ensued. I return to this subject in the next chapter.}

The event promises to “transform the iconic Fort Charlotte\footnote{Fort Charlotte is an historic military complex actually made up of three forts: Charlotte at the eastern end (directly behind Clifford Park), Stanley in the middle, and D'Arcy at the western end. Nevertheless, the whole area, which was constructed in the 18th century, is known as Fort Charlotte (Antiquities, Monuments and Museums Corporation).} into the greatest musical experience The Bahamas has ever seen.” Like the first Music Masters concert in Freeport, the final concert in Nassau will be followed immediately by a Midnight Rush. This is another “massive street rush,” with the motto “Don’t Spectate, Join the Rush” \cite{The Tribune 2014d}.

The Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival season will end with Road Fever on May 9, an event scheduled to last all day, from 11am to 8pm. Described on promotional materials as the “main masquerade,” Road Fever will be comprised of groups of various sizes with themed costumes and dancing to live and recorded music. The parade will end at Arawak Cay, described as “the most iconic foreshore grandstand
crossing of any carnival” (Bahamas National Festival Commission 2014b). Costumes for Road Fever are the ones that have to incorporate indigenous materials “such as straw, sisal and Bahamian fabric.” The Commission intends for these “costumes to be much lighter than typical Junkanoo costumes to allow for greater freedom of movement” (The Tribune 2014d). There is also a competition being held for Road Fever music, which opened on Easter Monday 2014 and ended on Easter Monday 2015. Musicians were encouraged to release their songs so that the public could become familiar with them, with a view to them being played during the parade. Registration for this competition is free, and the song with the most plays throughout Road Fever will be declared the winner. It is unclear how much the winning artist will receive, as the registration form states $7,500, while the flier says $5,000 (Bahamas National Festival Commission 2014d and 2014e).

Ticket prices for the carnival events vary. A day pass for activities in Grand Bahama costs $30, and a weekend pass costs $50. A day pass for events in New Providence costs $15, and weekend passes cost $40. Although the New Providence passes include entrance at Da Cultural Village, Junkamania, and the Midnight Rush, they do not include attendance at the final Music Masters concert. These are sold separately, with general admission tickets costing $50, preferred seating $75, and reserved seating $125.

Road Fever costumes are another expense separate from the New Providence day pass, but these too can be purchased from the carnival website. There is a section dedicated to costumes by the various groups, and clicking on a group’s name will take you to a page with individuals modeling their themed costumes. The least expensive costume listed is $100, for one of the female costumes in the Empire of Love group. The most expensive costume listed is $1,200, again for a female, this one for someone at the frontline of Barabbas Carnival Tribe. These prices are far from the
average, however, which ranges from about $250-$300 to $800. Once an individual selects a group and a costume, they can customize its size by entering their body’s measurements before finalizing their purchase. As a concession for buying a costume through the website, individuals receive free general admission to the Music Masters concert the night before in New Providence. The website accepts payments made through Visa, MasterCard, Discover, PayPal, Maestro, and American Express.

**Economics**

Although the BNFC is reaching out to the Bahamian public to become involved with, and attend, the carnival, it is very much oriented outwards, to attract tourists. Dr. Daniel Johnson, Minister of Youth, Sports, and Culture, said the carnival should be viewed as an “economic stimulus package” (Jones Jr. 2014; S. Brown 2014). Indeed, members of the Festival Commission traveled to Atlanta to promote the carnival in October 2014, and invited African American journalists to The Bahamas for a briefing in February 2015 (Carroll 2014c; Bahamas Carnival Facebook page).

In a presentation to The Bahamas Cabinet in April 2014, Christie gave a preview of the research done by the BNFC into the economic impact of the carnival. This was followed by a more detailed presentation given two months later in the House of Assembly. The projected operating expense of the carnival was $9 million, with revenue of $7.5 million and a shortfall of $1.5 million. The economic impact was forecast at $27 million the first year, $30 million the second, and $33 million in the third. The projections also indicated that the carnival could generate approximately 2% of the country’s GDP. In his presentation to Cabinet, Christie highlighted the fact that there are over 300 carnival-like festivals around the world: “It’s not just a Trinidad and Brazil thing. The one in… Canada made like $400 million. And I said so
if they do it in Canada and they do it in New York, I want some of that” (Rolle-Brown 2014a and 2014c).

Paul Major, chair of the BNFC, compared plans for The Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival to carnival in Trinidad: “In Trinidad, the government spends $62 million, but the overall economic impact is $380 million. That includes the money people spend on food, costumes, living expenses, airfare and everything else […] That’s what they do to stimulate economic activity and GDP growth. So if we can eventually triple what we put into it, it makes all the economic sense.” Major said that although the government may not see immediate returns on its investments, the economy will be stimulated. He also explained that while The Bahamas is not yet known for carnival, it has “competitive advantages” over Trinidad. For one, The Bahamas has 4 times the number of hotel rooms, and 20 times the number of cruise ship beds. Major expanded on cruise visitors: “Every weekend we get about 25,000 to 30,000 cruise ship passengers. If we can get 20 percent of those visitors and 20 percent of our hotel visitors, we could have about 20,000 people on the street. We’ve been doing festivals – Junkanoo and Goombay festivals – for years. We just need to bring it all together” (Rolle-Brown 2014b).

*The Nassau Guardian* reported in May 2014 that the BNFC planned to raise capital in order to take some of the financial burden off of the government (Rolle-Brown 2014b). Major told the *Guardian* that they are “expecting to get sponsorships of probably around $5, $6 million.” They were also “looking at other…revenue forms of around $1, $2 million.” (Jones Jr. 2014). In a joint press conference in November 2014, it was announced that the Bahamas Telecommunication Company (BTC) is the $1 million title sponsor of the carnival and its first corporate partner. The sponsorship is split between cash and in-kind services - $750,000 in cash and $250,000 in joint marketing and branding opportunities (*The Nassau Guardian* 2014b). There are other
levels of sponsorship listed on the carnival website – official sponsor, gold, silver, and bronze – and the coverage in these categories indicates how the carnival events are ranked by the government. The official sponsor has similarly comprehensive advertising coverage as the title sponsor. Gold level sponsors are promoted at the “highest profile event,” the Music Masters concert, silver level sponsors at Road Fever, “one of the two highest profile events,” and bronze at Midnight Rush or Junkamania. Other financers listed on the website are Atlantis, SuperClubs Breezes Resort & Spa Bahamas, Kalik, the Ministry of Tourism, BahamasAir, FlamingoAir, and WesternAir, although where they fall in the aforementioned categories is not stated.

A more detailed account of the BNFC’s spending was published in The Nassau Guardian this February 2015. The Commission has a subsidy program for SMEs which provides groups with 1,000 or more members up to $25,000. As of the last week in January 2015, the BNFC had “spent $1.59 million on the festival with 214 SMEs and several hundred thousand” on Da Cultural Village in Nassau, “which it projects will have a GDP impact of $7.96 million.” In the time remaining until the main events in May, the Commission expects to “spend an additional $5 million in the local economy, for a total projected economic impact of $20.65 million” (G. Brown February 2015a). Major said that the people making the costumes, working on stage, and selling materials from the Family Islands will be the recipients of “all of that money” (ibid). The following is a table taken from an information document I received from Arlene Nash-Ferguson. Under the heading, “Business Opportunities,” it reads:
1. Industries that benefit from Carnival:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>i. The Food Industry</th>
<th>ix. Electronics Industry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ii. Transportation (Land, Sea and Air)</td>
<td>x. Cosmetology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii. Hotels and Travel</td>
<td>xi. Alcohol and Soft Drink Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv. The Craft Industry and Souvenirs</td>
<td>xii. Printing and Packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v. Foreign Currency Exchange</td>
<td>xiii. The Music Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vi. Bed and Breakfast Hotels</td>
<td>xiv. Recording Industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vii. Textile Industry</td>
<td>xv. The Video Production industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viii. Media and Telecommunications</td>
<td>xvi. Event Planners</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Industries that benefit from the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, BNFC 2014b

In the February report from the *Guardian*, Major asserted, “Everybody’s going to make some money as a result of this $9 million” (G. Brown 2015a). This chart demonstrates just who the BNFC and the Prime Minister envision as “everybody.” Major also explained that the government views the carnival as “an economic stimulus, not a P&L [profit and loss].” Furthermore, they are “here to help people create businesses and sustainable income, not one-off costumes” (G. Brown 2015a).

Christie and Major’s references to the benefit-to-cost ratio of investing in carnival were also raised by Nicolette Bethel in her paper on the economic impact of Junkanoo. Summarizing the research into Caribbean festivals by Keith Nurse et al., she explained: “While the investment in such festivals must be significant in order for them to succeed financially, there is a high return on that investment when it is made.” Along with Trinidad Carnival, the St. Lucia Jazz Festival and Barbados Crop Over are other major festivals in the Caribbean. Nurse et al.’s research demonstrates that of these, the St. Lucia Jazz Festival has the highest benefit-to-cost ratio – 9.1:1. Trinidad Carnival is second, with a ratio of 7:1. These numbers are competitive when compared with those of renowned international festivals like the Edinburgh Arts Festival, which has a ratio of 11:1 (Bethel 2014: 23). From Christie’s statement to the
Cabinet, it is clear that he is aware of these phenomena and wants The Bahamas to achieve the same financial benefits.

**Positive Response**

Public response to the Prime Minister’s initial announcement, and subsequent news reports about the carnival, has been mixed. Some Bahamians support it wholeheartedly, which is most obvious from the large number of Road Fever groups. There are 30 listed on the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival website. The leaders of these groups, and other Bahamians in support of the carnival, envision several benefits. They are compelled by the projected financial gains for the country as a whole, as well as the opportunity for a variety of Bahamian businesses and entrepreneurs to receive broader local and international exposure. One Road Fever band, Vindi Dynasty Carnival Group, “was inspired by its parent company Vindi House of Straw, which produces a unique line of authentic Bahamian handbags, accessories and home items made from straw” (Rodgers 2014a). Designer Letara Ingraham, president of Vindi Dynasty group, told a *Tribune* reporter that carnival is “a great opportunity for young entrepreneurs like myself to be exposed to an international market” (ibid).

Another reason Bahamians are in favor of the carnival is that they believe it will help to increase the modes and opportunities for cultural expression in the country. According to the Empire of Love Carnival Band, “There are many positive attributes to a Junkanoo Carnival Festival. However, the main focus should be on Junkanoo Carnival as an addition to the country’s cultural expression rather than a replacement of Junkanoo. Once this issue is properly addressed, there will be many more interested persons” (Rodgers 2014a).

Supporters of the carnival also point out the way it folds more people into the Junkanoo experience. Letara Ingraham said, “Junkanoo is a spectator’s event. With
carnival, local and international guests are able to be a part of the experience. [...] 
During Junkanoo people dance on the side of the road and want to be involved, but 
with carnival you can participate in it and be a part of the culture” (Rodgers 2014a). 

Other Bahamians are defending the carnival because they do not want to see 
such a large, expensive, public venture fail. The following is a comment posted on 
the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival Facebook page, in response to a picture of children 
dressed in costumes for the Youth Culture Fest.64

Bahamians should support and be a part of the movement/evolution of this 
event (which is inevitable) in order to help guide it in the right direction. If you 
sit on the sidelines and criticize you are not making any positive change either. 
This is one event which has been able to procure major sponsorship. ONE 
EVENT and if supported it will become an income generating event for many 
where there was none before. Carpe Diem people. In life some gain more than 
others. Do your part to gain what you can and aid others to do the same. 
Contribute to success rather than failure....In all things do your best! Why 
would anyone wish for their own people to fail in anything. There is too much 
negative energy in this Bahamaland and it makes absolutely no sense and it is 
to our own detriment. The world is watching and instead of showing solidarity, 
we show the world that we are not getting along at home....Good Grief! get it 
together people! (Wilson 2015)

These voices endorsing the carnival appear to represent only a small number 
of Bahamians, because the majority of opinions on the internet, the radio, and in the 
newspapers have expressed deep distress, frustration, and dismay at Christie’s initial 
announcement of the carnival, and subsequent announcements about the planning 
process.

64 The picture was part of an album titled “The Kiddie Culture Fest: Junior Rd. Fever,” a prime example 
of the blurred lines between Youth Culture Fest and the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival.
The Problems with the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival

“Bahamian Carnival is a Betrayal”

Just under two weeks after the Prime Minister’s announcement at the House of Assembly in May 2013, Nicolette Bethel, who is also a former Director of Culture, criticized his plan, calling it essentially nonsense. She made her opinions public at “The Bahamas at 40: Reflecting on the Past, Envisioning the Future,” a conference hosted by the College of The Bahamas and organized in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the nation’s independence. At that time, Bethel and her team had just finished their research on the economics of Junkanoo. She presented “Pricing the Dream: The Economics of Junkanoo,” at a panel entitled “Dream Better: Culture as Development in The Bahamas.” At the conclusion of her paper she addressed
Christie's still-fresh revelation, outlining three reasons the carnival would not be successful. First was the fact that The Bahamas is a Protestant country: “We don’t celebrate Mardi Gras. The average person in the street who was not raised Anglican or Catholic only just found out in the last three years what lent was.” Second, The Bahamas does not have the same pull for carnival festivals as other locations. Bethel predicted anyone looking for a Mardi Gras celebration would likely go to New Orleans before they come to The Bahamas. Third, the carnival or Mardi Gras season is the time of year when Junkanooers relax, and even visit Trinidad or Brazil for their carnival, or New Orleans for Mardi Gras. Bethel added that those other Caribbean countries that do have a tradition of Mardi Gras “do not attempt to set up tourism-oriented carnivals to compete with Trinidad” (*The Tribune* 2013a).

Although many Bahamians know the idea of carnival is ubiquitous, the word has the strongest association with Trinidad's Carnival. While it is true that Trinidad’s proximity to our nation has a great deal to do with this, it also undoubtedly because generations of Bahamians have been going to Trinidad's Carnival to enjoy themselves. The association is so deep that the BNFC has had to make a concerted effort to dissociate the word “carnival” from the idea of Trinidad’s Carnival. The information sheet I received from Arlene Nash-Ferguson had an entire section addressing this subject. It reads as follows:

**Carnival is not foreign.**
1. The word carnival is not Trinidadian in the same way regatta or homecoming is not Bahamian.
2. Carnivals, regattas, homecomings happen all over the world.
3. Over 200 carnivals take place around the world, in Italy, Nigeria, China, even Russia.
4. There isn’t even consensus as to where carnival actually originated; some say it was France while others say it was Italy.
5. Carnivals are made unique because they consist of each country’s cultural expressions. (BNFC 2014b)
It is unclear to me how widely the information document was circulated, but these points were unsuccessful in convincing Bahamians of a generic idea of a carnival.

While the dates of the event changed soon after serious development of the carnival began, Bethel’s other points echo what other Bahamians found incredible about Christie’s announcement. They are doubtful that visitors will come to our carnival over the established ones in places where carnival has grown up alongside the people, or that they will be able to afford to come to our carnival after having gone to celebrate in another country just weeks prior (cf. Benjamin-Smith 2014a). Bahamians called in to radio talk shows, wrote letters to the editors of local dailies, weeklies, and newsletters, and had conversations among themselves on Facebook to discuss what felt like a betrayal by the government.

Pamela Burnside is the owner and manager of Doongalik Studios Art Gallery and co-founder of Creative Nassau, an organization devoted to promoting and celebrating Bahamian art, culture, and heritage. She wrote several letters to the editor about the carnival, and in the first of these exclaimed:

What utter nonsense is this to state that our ‘in da belly’ cultural street festival is not good enough to stand on its own merit? Whose misguided idea is it to try to usurp the power of Junkanoo by cloaking it as a week long Mardi Gras copycat event in order for it to be ‘good enough’ to present to a visitor! Are you going to tell me that we, the Bahamian PEOPLE cannot design and produce OUR OWN week long festival using OUR OWN CREATIVE EXPERTS? What a slap in the face! What a blatant put down! What a low blow! […]Junkanoo is, without a doubt, a celebration of the Bahamian Spirit – it is an innate part of the Bahamian Being that cannot be taken from us….so why would we wish to dilute it’s power? (Burnside 2013)

In a letter a year later Burnside discusses with ire the fact that delegations were sent abroad to “investigate how we can transport this money-making machine,” and that experts were brought to The Bahamas to “show us how to do it their way,”

65 This is an onomatopoeic representation of the sound of the cowbells in Junkanoo.
meanwhile the leader of Barabbas and the Tribe Junkanoo group cannot get governmental support to take Junkanoo to Georgia – “where it is celebrated annually with a key to the city!” She goes on to cite other instances when artists have been unable to “get one governmental cent” to support their work locally or to take it internationally, and says, “There are many other disgraceful stories like these which indicate that Bahamian art, culture and heritage does not have the respect it deserves!” (Burnside 2014a and 2014b). In this same letter, Burnside identifies six problems with the carnival and similar “grand ideas”:

1) They start with the misguided premise that foreign is better
2) They are announced with great fanfare without proper local consultation beforehand
3) They operate based on the misconception that The Bahamas has no worthwhile culture
4) They are managed by persons who readily give up The Bahamas' rightful place to outside entities with open arms
5) They do not give Bahamians the opportunity to participate up front “in the first beginning”
6) They are concerned first and foremost with money instead of uplifting the Bahamian people

Other comments and letters to the editor voicing similar thoughts could be read and heard across the country (cf. Bodie 2014a and 2014b). Beneath *The Tribune* article reporting the individuals appointed by the Prime Minister to the BNFC are a number of comments, each of them expressing only disapproval and frustration. One reader, Greentea, said they “would like to think that at least one of these twenty-seven people had the courage to tell the prime minister [sic] that this was and is a terrible idea,” and described the event as a “waste of resources and lack of value for what we do have. Carnival [in Trinidad] didn’t emerge overnight as a marketing gimmick. It’s a part of the deep history and culture of a place five times larger population wise and with a larger diaspora to build on. What a bankrupt leadership. Desperation exposes all. Deaf, dumb and blind” (*The Tribune* 2013b).
In a conversation I had with a young woman, Knijah Knowles, who has been to Carnival in Trinidad and St. Lucia and Crop Over in Barbados, she described the way these celebrations “are integral parts of their histor[ies][…] They did not begin as tourist expos, they’re just massive displays of a country’s history and a country’s culture.” She explained that in these places, everyone is totally involved in the revelry and is swept up in the season. In Barbados, “From the middle of May until the end of Crop Over, you will hear no other music besides soca music. […] You’ll have to go looking, even on their version of 100 Jamz, you’ll have to go looking for foreign music. It’s a total, culture immersion, and blast.” She was working in St. Lucia one summer and was there for their two-day carnival. Although those days are not public holidays, when she asked her boss if she needed to come to work, “He was like yea, but no one’s gonna be here!” As for Carnival time in Trinidad, there is calypso everywhere on “huge steel pan orchestras that are put on wheels [and] paraded through the streets […] to get people to hype up.” She continued: “The reason why [these festivals are] so successful is because there’s complete and total buy-in from everybody – from institutions, from people, complete buy-in. We don’t have that. And so, just… I don’t think they understand what carnival is” (interview with author July 11, 2014).

The intense foreignness of carnival has caused many Bahamians to take the government’s decision very personally. Cobalt, a commenter underneath another Tribune article said: “I thought Perry said the PLP’s motto was a Bahamas for Bahamians! Now he’s ushering in a foreign festival and attempting to merge it into our culture??? I guess all he really wanted was another opportunity to do the Perry

66 100 Jamz is a radio station that plays hip hop and r&b, primarily from the United States. It is popular with the younger generation of Bahamians.
67 “Believe in Bahamians” was the PLP’s slogan for their 2012 General Election campaign.
We Bahamians must be the biggest suckers on the face of the earth. SMH (Turnquest 2014). Similarly, in June 2014 someone named Kingsley Black wrote a letter to the editor of The Tribune, explaining that he considered it “an affront, an insult to the people of The Bahamas for our leaders to go foreign to copy a brand name for our things” (Black 2014). The Tribune reported that Bahamas Public Services Union President John Pinder also accused the government of copying other countries in the region to create the carnival (Scavella 2014). He and Black are two of many who used the words copy, copycat, copycatting and similar terms to describe the government’s adoption of carnival.

Even more than feelings of betrayal, Bahamians expressed despair about the state of the arts community, and asked existential questions about who we are as a people and how decisions about carnival are in turns decisions about the way we represent ourselves. Dionne Benjamin-Smith is a graphic artist with the firm Smith & Benjamin, and editor and publisher of their weekly newsletter, Bahamian Art & Culture. In a letter to readers she said: “I can’t believe the thought process behind this [carnival] could be so wanton and cavalier that they would put our nation’s reputation and good name at stake for couple dollars. Because if I consider that option, then what are we all doing here? What is the work that we Bahamian creatives are excreting blood, sweat and tears for? What is the point, if it all can be sold down the river so easily?” (2014a). In yet another letter to the editor, Pamela Burnside asked: “Where are we leading our country, people? We are prostituting our culture and our souls for the almighty dollar. Is this the way we wish to present ourselves, and is this the way we want the world to view us?” (2014c).

Bahamians have christened Perry Christie’s style of dance the “Perry shuffle.” SMH stands for Shake(ing) My Head.
Funding the Wrong Festival

Kirkland “KB” Bodie is a famous local musician who came out strongly in opposition to the carnival. He was a guest on a radio talk show and wrote a number of letters to the editors of local dailies and weeklies about the way the proposed carnival “enrages every fiber of [his] Bahamian being.” In his earliest letter, in which he described the carnival as a “betrayal,” he referenced Junkanoo and the other local festivals we have – Cat Island Rake N’ Scrape, Crab Fest, Goombay Summer, Junkanoo in June – and asked why the Commission does not invest in those instead. While he said there is nothing wrong with borrowing ideas and studying the success of other festivals, it should not happen “at the expense of further diluting and watering down of our Bahamian culture, and kicking our people further down the ladder’s rung of not knowing and feeling positive about themselves” – the reason for the escalation of crime and “moral decay” in the nation. He went on to say, “Many have sacrificed their lives and livelihoods to uplift this country’s culture. All of the hard work done to instill national pride back into our people’s lives have been flushed away by the laziness and copycatness (if there ever was a word, it would be appropriate here), of a few, and only shows the weakness and lack of ideas by our nation’s leaders” (2014a and 2014b; cf. Bodie 2014c).

A little over a month later, in a letter entitled “To the Minister of Youth, Sports and Other Countries’ Culture,” KB asked repeatedly why millions of taxpayer dollars should be “wasted” on “another country’s culture.” He challenged the minister to provide the organizers of Junkanoo and of the Rake N’ Scrape Festival each with ten million dollars, so that they could have the same parameters of success as the carnival, since “Fair is fair right?” He also said passionately, “Sir you have terrible advisors around you, and they will cost you in the long run. I want our Junkanoo Parades to succeed. I want our Rake-N-Scrape Festivals to succeed. I also want our
Goombay Summer Festivals to succeed, and with all my heart and soul I want this carnival to fail in The Bahamas. I don’t care if it makes billions” (Bodie 2014e).

While not all as dramatically as KB, there are countless other examples of Bahamians asking the same questions, and proposing Junkanoo or other local traditions be used as the model for a new festival (cf. M. Thompson 2014; Scavella 2014; Grant Jr. 2014). James Catalyn, playwright and former Tourism Executive in the Ministry of Tourism, wrote about Goombay Summer in a letter to the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, Members of Parliament as well as the general public:

“We had an ALL BAHAMIAN festival: GOOMBAY SUMMER, a successful three month Summer event, that during my many years in the Ministry of Tourism, we marketed WORLDWIDE and with much success.[…] It was different, unique, and TOTALLY Bahamian AND it DID attract tourists…many tourists.

If we want a festival, why not revisit GOOMBAY SUMMER intelligently? […] But nay, no one is listening. No one else has ideas or common sense, nor creative ability. All of the brilliance sits in one place…in Rawson Square. […] And don’t tell me the ‘country needs money.” It needed the “tourist dollar” when we did GOOMBAY SUMMER – all-Bahamian and attracting the “tourist dollar.” (2014)

Dionne Benjamin-Smith wrote a letter to readers of Bahamian Art & Culture, “and somewhat indirectly” to the BNFC, “regarding the naming, the timing, the concepts, the logo, the slogan, the marketing […] and the way all these aspects had an undeniably non-Bahamian, pro-Trinadian/Caribbean feel” (Benjamin-Smith 2014b). This received “hundreds of emails and posts on Facebook from [their] loyal Bahamian and international readers who [were] also perplexed at the progression of this festival” (ibid). A few of these were published in the newsletter issued the following week, including a message from S.C., an active member of the One Family Junkanoo group:

We [Junkanoos] question ‘why?’ in so many ways………How will these costumes be mass-produced, notwithstanding [the fact that] it can be done, but at what
cost [to the individuals involved]? How is it that $9,000,000.00 could conveniently become available [for the creation of carnival] when, in the words of Jackson 70 they aren’t seeing what dey looking at? (Bahamian Art & Culture 2014)

This last statement implies the blindness of the government to the value and potential in Junkanoo. S.C. closed by saying, “It’s a very slippery slope that this initiative is heading down, and it is now too late for a conversation with Junkanoos, as they are now all in the shack preparing for Bay. Also, the committee really and truly ain’ prepared to face the Junkanoo world on their input, because too many questions will not be answered. This is too convenient, and many of us feel disrespected as Junkanoos” (ibid).

Dr. Hubert Minnis, leader of opposition party the Free National Movement, also criticised the government for financing a carnival. On several occasions he called for the PLP to provide more “funding for traditional Junkanoo festivals instead of launching a new commercial cultural product” (Turnquest 2014). Acknowledging the fact that Junkanooers spend “thousands of their personal money to get to Bay Street at Christmas time,” sacrificing “their lives, their time, their family, spending days and nights in the shacks just to prepare to go to perform on Bay Street,” he said the $9 million should have been used to increase the seed money and prizes offered for Boxing and New Year’s Day Junkanoo parades. He added, “increased financial support would incentivize entrepreneurship as participants would be more inclined to expand their knowledge and cultural product” (ibid). Even Leslie Miller, Member of Parliament for the PLP, said, “I think we should be spending our money branding what we have instead of imitating or transplanting other people’s culture on our

70 Jackson Burnside III (1949-2011) is the late husband of Pamela Burnside. He was a Bahamian architect and visual artist, and a founding member of the One Family Junkanoo Organization. Burnside was (and is) deeply respected and admired by Bahamians for his contributions to the arts community and his championing of Bahamian culture.
people and call it something original. It is not. Junkanoo is original” (Cartwright-Carroll 2015a).

These complaints did not go unheard by the BNFC. Their response: “We recognize members of the cultural community have serious concerns about the level of investment in cultural development over the years by the government. However valid those concerns may be, they do not negate the benefits a Bahamas carnival will bring to the Bahamian cultural community. All around the world carnivals have proven themselves to create economic opportunity for small businesses, which use their talents and creativity to innovate new products and services to sell to the captive audience generated by a carnival” (The Tribune 2014d).

“Jump in Da Line”

The name and logo for the carnival provided yet more reasons for outrage. Recall from my discussion of the naming competition that “Bahamas Carnival” was the winning entry. For many Bahamians this felt essentially like an oxymoron because of the distance between Bahamian culture and carnival culture, a fact pointed out immediately to the BNFC (cf. M. Thompson 2014; Bowleg 2015). In a letter to readers, Benjamin-Smith wrote, “We knew it was supposed to be ‘carnival-type’; we didn’t think they would actually use the word ‘carnival’ as the name of the event. With no offense to the school kids [that won the competition], a collective shaking of the head could be felt in the art and cultural community” (Benjamin-Smith 2014a).

The BNFC explained, “The decision to name the festival Bahamas Carnival was not one that was taken lightly. The Bahamas is a brand unto itself with international recognition. Carnival is a universal label that over 200 cities around the

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71 He later apologized for these comments, explaining he was ignorant of the facts of the carnival and spoke out of turn. He also expressed full support for the event (S. Brown 2015b; Jones Jr. 2015).
world have adopted with tremendous success. With over 200 carnivals all over the world, who is copying whom?” (The Tribune 2014d). To that, Benjamin-Smith replied, “We are. We are copying what 200 other cities are doing instead of promoting our own indigenous unique culture that no one else in the world has. The Bahamas Carnival’s slogan is ‘Jump in da Line’. Yup, we are jumping in da line, alright [sic] – right behind 200 other cities who are doing the same thing” (2014c). Indeed, the Commission’s argument that Junkanoo was not a widely recognized name was rather ironic, given that there was much celebration in the summer of 2014 when readers of USA TODAY and 10Best named Junkanoo as their favorite Caribbean celebration, above Trinidad’s Carnival and Barbados’ Crop Over (10Best 2014; cf. Rolle-Brown 2014d). Even if the argument were made that that survey represents only American readers, Benjamin-Smith mused, “in the $9 million worth of marketing and promotion of this event, surely the word ‘Junkanoo’ will never appear in isolation; it will be described and explained and fleshed out with words and images and seen as the exotic and unique event that it is.” Furthermore, calling the event ‘Junkanoo Carnival,’ ‘Junkanoo Festival’ or something similar would be “a more authentic grounding from which to start and a beginning to a reconciliation between both sides of the discussion” (2014c).

The complaints about naming did not go unnoticed. At the launch event for the carnival, held on August 27, 2014, the Prime Minister announced that the name had been changed to “Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival” (Benjamin-Smith 2014d). This move came as a surprise to everyone, and the change was made allegedly “without any notice or consultation” with the BNFC (ibid). Dr. Hubert Minnis, leader of the FNM, described this as a “face saving” measure: “They said they believe in Bahamians, they initially came with Carnival which is not Bahamian. They got a lot of backlash, now what, they come with Junkanoo Carnival trying to put some
Bahamian entity into it” (Turnquest 2014). Dionne Benjamin-Smith noted too that a number of dissenters of the name Bahamas Carnival felt the change was too little, too late, and saw it as a “crumb from the table laden with numerous concerns regarding this government-designed ‘national’ festival” (Benjamin-Smith 2014d). She pointed out what many people wondered: how the Commission would accept the change, since there had already been so much marketing material “inclusive of printed materials, advertisements, website, Facebook page,” none of which had been changed to incorporate the new name (ibid). At this time most of these items have been changed, with the exception of the Facebook page, which is still titled Bahamas Carnival.72

The name was not the only thing under debate. The official logo is considered by many to be a disgrace, as it features an eye mask, a visual representation of the carnival whose name and cultural associations are so far from our own. In her second letter to the editor, Pamela Burnside addressed the call that the BNFC put out for costume designs in local media. She declared it “quite obvious” that the advertisement was “produced by the ‘foreign expert’ [invited by the Commission],” because of the depiction of a female participant – an issue I will return to later – and the fact that the logo was a feathered mask. She asked, “[W]as the winner of these competitions a Bahamian graphic designer?” (2014a). We know from the results that no Bahamians won in this category (The Tribune 2014a), but it was not for want of submissions. In fact, Benjamin-Smith explained to readers that she and her husband, who is also an artist, both entered designs for consideration but were rejected. “From what [they] understand, no other designs submitted to the competition were accepted either” (Benjamin-Smith 2014a).

72 However, the URL specific extension is Junkanoo Carnival, so the address is www.facebook.com/junkanoocarnival.
In addition to the blatantly unfamiliar feathered logo, the slogan too was unbelievable, as it was lifted directly from a famous Trinidadian song. In the same letter, Benjamin-Smith narrates her experience viewing the call for costume designs. She begins by describing the logo:

It features an attractive, but distinctively carnivalesque eye mask with feathers on the right side. On the left sees the placement of The Bahamas’ official logo. Then, there was the final piece.

Politely tucked under the logo – the item that caused me to groan, the thing that caused KB to say, "Oh my God…" – was the slogan of the festival – "Jump in Da Line".

For those who don't know, "Jump in Da Line" or "Shake, Shake, Shake Señora" is the name of a 1946 Calypso song composed by Trinidad's Lord Kitchener, recorded by Bahamian folk singer Joseph Spence in 1958, but most famously recorded in 1961 by the renowned Calypso singer of Caribbean descent, Harry Belafonte. Now if that doesn't scream 'Not Bahamian', I don't know what does. If that line appears in Bahamian culture at all, I am completely unaware of it and would really like to be informed if it is. Please let me know.

I was incredulous – a Trinidadian Calypso song title is the slogan of the "Bahamas Carnival"? No wonder KB mad. (Benjamin-Smith 2014a)

This is an image of the original logo, the one Benjamin-Smith describes seeing:

![Bahamas Carnival logo 1](image)

Figure 6. Bahamas Carnival logo 1. Bahamian Art & Culture September 18, 2014

As with the name change, the BNFC must have taken notice of people's complaints about the slogan. This was the next iteration of the logo:
Notice the slogan now reads “In the Spirit of Junkanoo.” This logo was used after the Prime Minister’s name-changing announcement. The changes did not stop there, however, and the logo went through two more transformations. First it read, “Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, May 7-9 2015,” getting rid of the slogan altogether but highlighting the event dates. This was soon replaced by the current logo, which includes the primary sponsor information:
Even with these changes to the title of the event, the old slogan has not died. The advertising language still encourages people to “jump in da line,” and the updates on Facebook and Instagram regularly use the hashtag #jumpindaline.

“**This Naked Parade**”

In her discussion of the call for costume designers, Burnside included the illustration of a participant – featuring a woman in a “skimpy costume with lots of feathers” – as one of its offending elements. She argued that the three choices behind this depiction – a woman, a skimpy costume, and feathers – “established a strong Trinidadian standard of costuming half naked girls for the Bahamas Carnival, negating any Bahamian content whatsoever” (2014a). In Benjamin-Smith’s discussion of the advertisement, she also referred to this illustration, and said it looked “very much like it was taken right from the parade route of Trinidad Carnival.” She also pointed out that the advertisement includes wrist and ankle cuffs in its description of possible features of costumes, “items that are part and parcel of the quintessential Trinidadian Carnival costume” (2014a). The following is the illustration under discussion:
In addition to the resemblance to Trinidadian costumes, Benjamin-Smith pointed out that even the “concept of making costumes for sale to potential event participants is another "bite," if you will, of what they do at Trinidad Carnival, where they offer a selection of different costumes from which persons would purchase for parade day” (2014a).

The costume’s Trinidadian aesthetic is one issue. The illustration also brings up respectability politics, which are implied in Burnside’s choice to add the descriptor “half naked.” She points out that for people all over the world “[c]arnival equals party time with revelry, abandon and celebration” (2014a). The costumes suggested by the advertisement encourage this kind of freedom, and conjure images of amoral and licentious behavior in the minds of many Bahamians, behavior that is the opposite of the nation’s more modest sensibility. In my conversation with Knlijah, she commented on the fact that the social mores of The Bahamas are at odds with the attitudes that are associated with carnivals:
One, we don’t have that culture. We are far too conservative to do what Carnival and Crop Over is. Anyone’s ever been to one, lived in those countries, or just seen the pictures from a road parade? That is not gonna happen in The Bahamas. At all. And you can see it from…they do a mini version with the UWI [University of the West Indies] kids who are here? They do their own street carnival. And when you see them in the road carryin’ on just like they do at home, Bahamians drivin’ like “Oh my God, look at that slackness!!” [unintelligible] No! And even when I saw the ads for the competition, for designing the costume? They’re like, let your costume reflect Bahamian sensibilities, I’m like, Bahamian sensibilities are the complete opposite of public wil’in’ out. Yea we do it in private but we are a publicly conservative country. (interview with author, July 11, 2014)

In his letter to the Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture, KB referred to the carnival derisively as “this naked parade,” and drove home the issue of respectability politics even more strongly. He used words like “hedonistic,” and painted a picture of revelers “skipping through the streets rubbing up on each other, drinking rum and cavorting around as if in a Roman or Greek orgy exhibition.” He said, “Satan usually comes adorned in glitz to fool the public. This carnival is not ours and it will corrupt our nation. It is a satanic festival and it should stay in hell where it belongs. I would ask the church to keep a close eye on this carnival thing and watch as the government brings in low morals and a low vibration festival to further corrupt our nation” (Bodie 2014d and 2014e).

All of my life, I have heard The Bahamas described as a “Christian nation,” and I assume that it has been imagined this way for decades. As such, the Bahamas Christian Council (BCC), formed in 1948 and comprised of representatives of various denominations from islands across the country, has a great deal of influence on the population and our politicians. The BCC did indeed keep an eye on carnival developments, and in a statement released on January 26, 2015 declared:

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73 The BCC regularly speaks out on matters of national interest, organizes conferences, conclaves, and national programs, and is a part of the ratings board that filters all of the films that are shown in Bahamian cinemas. Although its power in the country is debated, and its pronouncements on national issues are never embraced by the entire Bahamas, they are still a known and recognized voice in the country. In 2011, as a result of national concern about crime and violence in society, the BCC organized a conclave that dealt with “the various facets of crime and violence, and immigration policy and practices.”
We are of the view that the promotion of immodest costumes, such as those displayed for use in the upcoming Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, will not only promote promiscuity, but fornication, rape, incest, and other sins of the flesh as well. Such immodest and immoral body displays could well become the breeding ground for the premature sexualization of our children as they will not be immune from these perversions. (S. Brown 2015a)

Although the BCC is in support of the government seeking ways to boost the country's revenue, it cautioned against the “gates they are opening,” because it seems Bahamian women's sexuality is “being overtly exploited for monetary gain.” Furthermore, during a time when the government, social organizations, and Bahamians at large are working toward gender equality in our constitution, the BCC is concerned that the carnival is displaying women as “mere objects of lust.” The letter, written by the BCC president, explains, “We do not share the view that our women should be on display as objects; accordingly, we call on all concerned to resist the push to treat our mothers, daughters, and sisters with such gutter-like disrespect” (ibid).

Comments underneath The Tribune's report on the BCC’s statement asserted what Bahamians already knew – the Council was months late to the discussion. Long before their statement, as soon as the first costumes started appearing in the media, Bahamians were in lively conversations on the effects some of the skimpier ones would have on society. The Eden Carnival Band launched their theme and costumes at a party on a Saturday in early October 2014. The Tribune covered the launch with a news report, and this picture accompanied the story:

It featured presentations from the Commissioner of Police, the Superintendent of Prisons, the Director of Immigration and leaders of various denominations (The Bahamas Christian Council 2015). I cite this conclave as an example of the respect and power held by the BCC.
The article sparked a number of comments, the first made by asiseeit:

The police are going to have their hand[s] full. Rape will be a big problem. Bahamian males are not mature enough to handle this in a sensible manner. Just look at the amount of feeling up and groping that happens at Junkano [sic] in the crowd. Bahamian men on a whole do not understand how to respect females. Good luck. (The Tribune 2014i)

This initiated a conversation between other readers. One person critiqued asiseeit for making generalizations about Bahamian men, but the consensus was that women would be in danger because of their costumes. PKMShack worried that visitors would be harmed, which would contribute to The Bahamas’ reputation as “a violent place to visit.” Thisisours predicted a population boom next year as a result of “wild hedonistic carnival parties.” Stillwaters asked, “My Lord and my God, is this all we can aspire to as a nation??????? I fully agree with asiseeit!!” This comment received still more agreement, and Jlcandu exclaimed “God help us!!” (The Tribune 2014i).

There are Bahamians who have no problem with the costumes that were unveiled. Terrelle Wilson, the woman whose Facebook comment I quoted earlier, had
this to say about the brouhaha: “Our children currently see more nakedness on television and hear more sexually explicit and degrading music on our local radio stations and at school with their friends.” She added, “Promoting modesty is wonderful and I support it 100% but there is artistry behind other costumes that our local designers are experimenting with, some for the first [sic]. ARTISTS SHOULD NEVER BE STIFLED!” (Wilson 2014). Other comments I read on Facebook expressed the feeling that “our moral conscience is already in the pits,” so efforts should be made to get at the root of the problems rather than placing blame on costumes (Campbell Facebook comments, 2014). However, most of what I read on the internet would indicate that the majority of Bahamians are offended (cf. JB 2015a).

Even if they are not disturbed by the sexual nature of the costumes, Bahamians are aware that the designs are yet another instance of the carnival promoting another cultural tradition over our own. Emac commented on the Eden launch article, “How can one have fun by trying to emulate other people’s culture??? In showcasing this bullshit all we’re saying is that it is better in Trinidad” (The Tribune 2014i). This last phrase “better in Trinidad” is a reference to the slogan used by the Ministry of Tourism to promote The Bahamas during the 1980s – It’s Better in The Bahamas. What Emac is implying here is that the carnival the government is planning will have a deleterious effect on our tourism industry, pushing visitors to Trinidad instead of pulling them to The Bahamas.

“Junkanoo is My Carnival”

Once the top 25 songs selected for the Music Masters concert had been chosen, music quickly became another reason for Bahamians to feel indignant. Although the songs were supposed to have a uniquely Bahamian flavor, many felt that this was far from the case.
In his *Tribune* column “Young Man’s View,” Adrian Gibson asked “how dare” the Commission have musicians “participate in some competition that has a Soca twist” to it, and exclaimed that it was “not authentically Bahamian” (2015). Dionne Benjamin-Smith recounted her experience watching the Festival Commission’s television program announcing the 25 semi-finalist songs, a moment which started with interest but was “soon followed by further dismay.” She explained, “Listening to the short clips, the vast majority of these songs sounded like they were imported straight from the heart of Trinidad. They were Soca songs replete with Trinidadian idioms, phraseology, and even, as I sigh and shake my head, Trinidadian accents. What happened, my Bahamian musicians? Why y’all do that, man?” She said she hoped the songs that win sound Bahamian, “But the momentum is such, as I feared, that there is no stopping this Trinidadian-transplanted festival. Call it what you will. If it smells like a duck, walks like a duck, looks like a duck – it’s a duck” (2014d).

I listened to the 25 songs on both the carnival website and YouTube and do not have the same assessment as Benjamin-Smith. Most of the songs do have Bahamian characteristics, incorporating Junkanoo rhythms, the unmistakable sound of Junkanoo brass, elements of rake n’ scrape and/or lyrics which speak directly to social norms and cultural characteristics of The Bahamas. Nevertheless, the prominence of these characteristics varies from song to song, and can be difficult to pick out in some which have a more generic island pop kind of sound. Moreover, as Benjamin-Smith noted, many songs have undeniably Trinidadian elements. “Jump and Carry On” by Colyn McDonald, for example, uses lyrics like “fête,” “take ya rag and wave it up,” and “jump and wave.” These are all ways to describe soca parties and ways to dance at soca parties, so through his lyrics McDonald is encouraging listeners to imagine being at a Trinidadian, or Trinidadian inspired, event. To give a more

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74 The Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival YouTube channel handle is Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival.
75 For a report on the launch of the compilation CD in November 2014 see *The Tribune* 2014j.
general example, most of the Bahamians that use the word carnival in their songs switched their pronunciation of the word to sound more Trinidadian. Bahamians pronounce carnival with a stress on the first syllable and a rhotic, or pronounced, ‘r,’ whereas Trinidadians stress the first and last syllable and have a dropped, or non-rhotic, ‘r.’ With the exception of Angelique Sabrina, all other artists switched to this non-rhotic ‘r’ and added a stress to the last syllable. Raj the Entertainer had an over-pronounced ‘r,’ but he also adopted the Trinidadian stress pattern. Furthermore, his background singers say carnival in the Trinidadian style.

In sum, I found seven of the songs easily identifiable as Bahamian. My assessments were based on how closely each one aligned overall with the traditional or popular Bahamian music aesthetic, rather than the number or prominence of particularly Bahamian musical attributes. The most egregious song for me is not one that has any Trinidadian or stereotypically Caribbean characteristics. “Happy Birthday Bahamas” by Chris Fox sounds like an American Christian worship pop song from the 90s, including a small choral ensemble that features each voice in turn, a combination of stacked chord progressions and keyboard runs, and a chorus with the lines, “Our hearts are filled with thanks/Just because of you” and “You’re the reason I sing/You make me feel like a king.” It is completely out of place for the atmosphere the BNFC is creating. Furthermore, Bahamian independence is July 10, nowhere near the carnival season, which makes its inclusion in the top 25 even more confusing. The following table lists the songs in the semifinals and their prominent style characteristics. The songs in bold are the ones I found most obviously Bahamian.

76 Entering a combination of song title and artist name in the YouTube search box is the easiest way to go directly to any one of these songs.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SONG</th>
<th>ATTRIBUTES</th>
<th>ARTIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Make Ya Feel Good</td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape</td>
<td>Angelique Sabrina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We Are the Night</td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape</td>
<td>Angelique Sabrina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junkanoo Rock</td>
<td>Slowed Junkanoo beat</td>
<td>Tyrone “Plati Dread” Bartlett</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better in The Bahamas</td>
<td>Junkanoo brass and drums</td>
<td>Raymond Campbell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rushin’ Down the Road</td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape; Junkanoo whistles; lyrics refer to Bahamian dances – skullin’, mash de roach</td>
<td>Christopher “Sketch” Carey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wine Like a Champion</td>
<td>“wine” (word for style of dancing), Junkanoo drum and cowbell rhythms</td>
<td>Christopher “Sketch” Carey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Happy Birthday Bahamas</td>
<td>Brass band, drumkit, gospel organ, choir; lyrics refer to cowbells ringing, beating the goatskin drum, and Bahamian islands but overall sounds American</td>
<td>George Christopher Fox</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Day All Night</td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape, Junkanoo beat</td>
<td>Bodine Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnival Is Here (On Da Road)</td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape, lyrics mention Bahamian islands, bush medicine</td>
<td>Colyn McDonald</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jump and Carry On</td>
<td>Lyrics repeat “Get ya rag”, “Jump and wave” – sounds like soca</td>
<td>Colyn McDonald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going Home</td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape, lyrics are a litany of traditional Bahamian activities – catching crabs, taking a mailboat, picking native fruit, etc.</td>
<td>Ian McQuay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junkanoo Party</td>
<td>Music from full Junkanoo ensemble: brass, cowbells, drums</td>
<td>Sonovia “Novie” Pierre</td>
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<tr>
<td>Junkanoo is My Carnival</td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape, Junkanoo</td>
<td>Sonovia “Novie” Pierre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas Come Together</td>
<td>Autotune; Junkanoo whistles; brass – but sounds more like marching band than Junkanoo, mentions streets and places in The Bahamas, “wave ya flag”</td>
<td>Cambrell Poitier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahamas Carnival (Jump and Wave)</td>
<td>Cowbell lick, Trinidadian lyric in chorus – “plenty baccanal”, sounds calypso</td>
<td>Valerie “Shugar” Richards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnival is Here</td>
<td>Junkanoo beat, non-Junkanoo cowbell lick, exaggerated “carnival”; “wave ya rag” lyric</td>
<td>Raj The Entertainer (Saunders)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fly Away With Me</td>
<td>Lyrics mention Bahamian islands, food, cultural norms;</td>
<td>Khiara Sherman</td>
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In December 2014, regional soca artists were brought in to perform at events designed to promote the carnival locally. This was yet another cause for concern. In his article for *The Tribune*’s column “Your Say,” Tony Grant Jr. commented on these parties, and mentioned that Bajan soca musician Rupee headlined a concert (Grant Jr. 2014). In a January 2015 letter to the editor, KB wrote angrily: “over the Christmas [of 2014], a gang of Trinidadian artists were brought in to perform while The Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival CD artisans got none of the work. How does that help them? Are they playing the Junkanoo Carnival CD at these so called ‘Fetes’?” (Bodie 2015a).

Bahamians were frustrated because the total amount being disbursed to local musicians is not anywhere near what the Commission was prepared to pay the headlining artist at the final Midnight Madness competition. The BNFC was in negotiations with Usher, then Janet Jackson, Rihanna, and there were rumors of them

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Artist(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Bahamaland By Da Sea</em></td>
<td>Some Junkanoo rhythms but overwhelmed by more generic island pop sound</td>
<td>Dwayne Simmons</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Everybody Jump in Da Line</em></td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape, cowbells</td>
<td>Sammi Starr</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>My Islands in The Sun</em></td>
<td>Cowbells, Junkanoo beat</td>
<td>Sammi Starr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mash Up This Carnival</em></td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape, slowed Junkanoo beat</td>
<td>Ericka “Lady E” Symonette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Roll Mama</em></td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape, lyrics referring to Bahamian dances – i.e. conch style, mash da roach, skull da boat</td>
<td>Terrelle Tynes-Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>In the Carnival</em></td>
<td>Doesn’t sound very Bahamian, generic kind of island pop</td>
<td>Georgina Ward-Rigby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bahamas Carnival</em></td>
<td>Rake n’ scrape; lyrics call out dance moves – i.e. dust ya foot, mash da roach</td>
<td>Preston “Puzzle” Wallace</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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77 These are organized by the last name of the artist, and titled according to the corresponding video on YouTube. The carnival website streams the music but does not identify track names. With the exception of “Junkanoo is My Carnival” by Sonovia Pierre, which is titled “Bahamas Carnival (Junkanoo Carnival)” on the *Jump in Da Line!* album, the song titles are the same.
trying to secure Beyoncé (Cartwright-Carroll 2015c; Dames 2015b; The Tribune 2015c). After the government failed to finalize the deal with Janet Jackson two Commission members resigned their positions, ostensibly for this reason (Scavella 2015a). The public learned that Jackson had asked $1.1m for herself, and an additional $800,000 for staging and production activities. It is likely that Rihanna and Beyoncé would have had even higher price tags. This is in stark contrast to Bahamian musicians who will be receiving a combined total of $50,000. Bahamian singer and activist, Terneille “TaDa” Burrows, spoke about her feelings on the matter as a guest on a radio show in March 2015. She told host Chrissy love:

[If y’all are gonna offer somebody $2 million dollars, or a couple of people $2 million dollars to headline, I am not gonna get excited about $20,000 if I win first place in a competition after I’ve made ten appearances, five appearances, unlimited, whatever it is you demand, had my song in your compilation CD, [and] had to go and pay an entry fee to enter the contest in the first place. (Reality Check 2015)]

Burrows was strongly supported by Love, who interjected with “Preach!” as she spoke.
Securing a headliner turned into something of a fiasco for the BNFC. Initially, they tried to make a game of the mystery artist, with the Facebook cover image asking mischievously who the headliner would be. In February 2015 Isaiah Taylor, founder of Baha Men, the group hired to open for this artist, expressed deep frustration that they still had no idea who it was. He suggested planning was over a year behind what it should be, and also stated that if Baha Men needed to headline they were ready and qualified offered to do so (Cartwright-Carroll 2015b and 2015c). As time wore on, chairperson Paul Major admitted that he “fully expect[ed]” the venture would lose money because of the delay in finalizing the headliner. He expressed hope, however, that it would still be able to attract impulse spenders. (G. Brown 2015b). Not long after this report, both the Minister of Youth, Sports, and

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78 “Rock Sounder” is not this person’s real name; rather, it identifies this person as coming from the settlement by the same name in Eleuthera.
Culture, Dr. Daniel Johnson, and the Minister of Tourism Obie Wilchombe, said that the carnival did not need an international headliner because it was supposed to be exposing and highlighting Bahamians (Rolle-Brown 2015a; Cartwright-Carroll 2015e). Finally, on March 30, 2015, it was announced that renowned Trinidadian artist Machel Montano, known as the King of Soca, would be the final act of the Music Masters concert in May.\(^7\)

The Commission also announced that Bahamian legend Ronnie Butler, as well as popular band Visage and solo artist Julien Believe, would be performing during the May 7-9 activities on New Providence. Soca artists Skinny Fabulous, Olatunji, and Bunji Garlin have also been hired to perform (Dames 2015d; Major 2015; Scavella 2015b).

The media described the selection of Montano as a “slap in the face to local artists,” and Isaiah Taylor, founder of Baha Men, admitted he felt “depressed” after hearing the news from the Commission. Taylor explained “it's not only insulting for Baha Men or just the musicians of this country. It is insulting to Bahamians on the whole.” In her report on the news of the headliner, Candia Dames wrote, “It will be hard for the government to convince many Bahamians that it is not importing another culture. The costumes associated with Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival scream Trinidad. And now, a big name Trinidadian artist has been selected” (2015c).

In a surprising turn of events, KB announced his support of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival in March 2015. He explained that he felt the government had shown they were working to Bahamianize\(^8\) the event, and thus felt comfortable giving it his endorsement (Bodie 2015b). After the announcement of Montano as headliner, however, KB again lambasted the government. He said, “We have a

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\(^7\) There were conflicting statements from the BNFC and chairperson Paul Major over whether or not there would be headliner or simply performers, then whether or not there would be several headliners, but the general consensus, as expressed by Isaiah Taylor, is “whoever is closing [i.e. Machel Montano] is the headliner” (Rolle-Brown 2015d; cf. Dames 2015c; Cartwright-Carroll 2015e).

\(^8\) The Prime Minister involved Minister of Tourism Obie Wilchombe in carnival planning in January 2015; Wilchcombe admitted that thus far the carnival did not seem overtly Bahamian and that “We have to draw more Bahamianism to it” (Dames 2015a).
situation where a Grammy award-winning group [Baha Men, in 2000] has to open up for a non-Grammy award winning group,” and added harshly, “We have to be the stupidest people in the world” (Rolle-Brown 2015d; cf. Bodie 2015c).

Along with the announcement of the headliner the BNFC revealed that musicians from Cuba and Haiti have been contracted to perform at the final Music Masters events in New Providence. This demonstrates a (late) effort to make the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival a more pan-Caribbean event. Roscoe Dames, CEO of the BNFC, said “We are excited to bring the Caribbean to The Bahamas as we take The Bahamas to the world” (The Tribune 2015c). Nevertheless, this new, more regionally inclusive vision for the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival has not been effectively transmitted and/or received by the public, which remains focused on the Trinidadian artists and the otherwise Trinidadian nature of the carnival.

“The Rapture is Really Coming”

Aside from the problems with appropriating and promoting Trinidadian culture for the festival event, Bahamians expressed concerned about the government ignoring the real issues in the country and putting so much money in the wrong place. Beneath the report on the Prime Minister’s announcement of the BNFC members were these comments:

Blackcat: I guess Perry Christie isn't too tired to put on a festival. Looks like the only time we hear from this great leader of our country is when it's time to throw party. Wow, something to rival Carnival? Sorry, I can't see it. Carnival and caribana [sic] are huge caribbean [sic] events and while they are great, I can't see this being a pressing issue to focus on during these tough times. We all like to party and the bahamas [sic] has great culture to promote, but I neither think this is the time nor do we have the financial resources to spend on something like this. The government is crying everyday about the lack of funds that they have but they have time to plan something like this?!
Crime is out of control, our economy is down and on the verge of being severely taxed, our national grade average is, what, E? and we throwing party. (The Tribune 2013b)

Banker: Christie festivaling while Nassau burns? Exactly what the country needs - a new festival and paying for festival commissioners. The rapture is really coming. (ibid)

Jt: Every day I think that the Bahamas govt. can't get any dumber, and every day they outdo themselves. [...] Does Christie know we already have an incredible, unique and culturally relevant festival twice each winter? Why are we copycatting other nations? Aren't there more important things to focus on right now?

National Festival Commission? Unemployment among the young is at 30%. I can't even. (ibid)

In response to The Tribune’s report on the Eden Carnival launch, harri wrote:

Got 9M$’s for Carnival...
oo$’s for traffic lights repair...
No vehicle plates...
PRICELESS!!! (The Tribune 2014i)

A colleague of mine posted a status on Facebook about the fuss that was being made by Bahamians who believe the carnival will encourage bad behavior. This sparked a conversation with her friends who had opinions about the carnival. One of them said:

well…you know im not in support of carnival.i get they think it can bring in more money to the country but my thing is…you’re spending $9 mil on ONE event when that money could be used for programs to combat these very issues we’re talking about. I have an issue with that when I can’t get enough money to run my programs because its [sic] going on bullshit.

Many Bahamians are increasingly frustrated and disappointed by the actions of the government as a whole and by stories of corrupt politicians. Moreover, the rate of violent crime has been steadily climbing, causing feelings of dismay, fear, and

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81 This person works in the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Culture, in the youth department. The programs she is talking about are probably related to her responsibilities.
resignation with the social situation. This is not the kind of atmosphere that will welcome a carnival, and countless people feel “$9 million is a lot of money to spend given the plethora of issues we are dealing with right now that [...] should take precedence” (Laurent King, Facebook conversation with author, March 2015; cf. Johnson 2015; JB 2015a).

“The Emperor Has No Clothes”

With the proposed carnival looking so much like the one that happens in Trinidad, it has not escaped Bahamians’ notice that other people from the Caribbean, and not just Trinidadians, might look down on us for so heavily borrowing from a tradition that is not our own. Dionne Benjamin-Smith asked if the Festival Commission had thought about the fact that “people will see that the Emperor has no clothes? That the festival looks completely Trinidadian and not Bahamian at all? Don’t they care what our Caribbean brothers and sisters will say? Don’t they know that they will laugh at us and scorn us behind our backs for stealing what is theirs?” (2014a).

The fact that The Bahamas is caught between the United States and the other countries of the Caribbean has caused Bahamians no small amount of grief over the years. I have heard numerous stories from friends and former classmates about their experiences with other Caribbean students at universities in Canada, the United States, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Barbados. What the stories all have in common is that the other students question how far they, and Bahamians at large, are truly a part of the Caribbean community. I too have experienced this kind of conversation from people that grew up in other Caribbean countries. Essentially, their feelings are that The Bahamas is just another part of the United States, and so Bahamians have more in common with Americans than with their island neighbors.
This resistance is frustrating for Bahamians, because we are very proud of being an island nation. While we do have strong ties with the United States, we feel very close to our Caribbean neighbors, with whom we share political, social, and cultural backgrounds. Word of the carnival will spread quickly through the region, and will likely make our relationship with our Caribbean cousins even more awkward than it is now. Discussing the subject of The Bahamas’ carnival with a friend, he told me about one of his closest friends, a Trinidadian he met when he went away for undergraduate study, who made fun of him and Bahamians all the time for not truly being Caribbean. He said that if his friend found out about the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, he would find it hilarious, and laugh about how we are not even Caribbean enough to imagine our own festival.

The Absence of Ownership

The fact that the carnival has no real public traction, even at this late stage, is very worrying for such a major event. Some Bahamians, especially young ones like Knijah, will go just for fun or to satisfy their curiosity. However, also like Knijah, they probably will not spend much money, and are especially unlikely to invest in a Road Fever costume. Having experienced the full Trinidadian Carnival package, which includes “parties all night, unlimited drinks, […] food on the route,” Knijah is not convinced that local carnival groups will be able to live up to that standard (interview with author July 11, 2014). Validity of that assumption aside, the cost of Road Fever costumes, and even the lower priced events, is going to be prohibitive for many Bahamians. In a depressed economy, Bahamians “are already pretty much broke” and attendance at one or more carnival event will be a financial sacrifice (Sarah Bayssassew, Facebook conversation with author, March 2015). Indeed, if costume sales are any indicator of Bahamian participation, the outlook seems grim. There have
been “startling poor sales” of costumes in the weeks leading up to the carnival, and some “bands are contemplating discounts or even outright giveaways of costumes to encourage local participation in the event” (G. Brown 2015d).

With such a dramatic, divisive beginning, the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival began on the wrong foot with most Bahamians and, despite concessions made to appease the critics, never righted itself. Feelings that carnival is a betrayal to the culture and sensibilities of Bahamians, and that the government is funding the wrong festival, if indeed it should be spending millions of dollars on a festival in the first place, are at the core of the issues the public has with the carnival. In my conclusion I take a step back from the details of the carnival in order to look at the bigger picture of tourism in The Bahamas, and to discuss what the carnival exercise reveals about tourism’s effects on Bahamians.
Conclusion

The Bahamas has been a generous host to visitors ever since its first one, Columbus, paved the way for the tidy dispatch of the native population. The geography, climate, and natural beauty of the islands make them particularly suited for visitors, but it was not until the mid 20th century that the government and the ruling class seriously invested in the tourism industry. Although it was slow to be embraced as the model for development, today tourism is the backbone of the Bahamian economy, and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.

Junkanoo is one of the signature elements of Bahamian cultural expression, and although the government has at various times moved to regulate it for use in the tourism industry, it remains the domain of Bahamians, many of whom pour their whole lives into the production of the parade. Research shows that in recent years the major parade seasons, encompassing Boxing and New Year's Days, regularly cost the nation tens of millions of dollars, and made less than half a million dollars in profit (Bethel 2014).

When Prime Minister Perry Christie announced plans for a carnival-style celebration, many Bahamians saw this as a betrayal, and loudly protested throughout the event's evolution. In spite of the opposition, the inaugural Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival happened this year, with the season opening on Easter Monday, April 6, 2015, and ending on May 9, 2015.

While there are several issues Bahamians find objectionable in the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, the one at the heart of it all is that it casts off our own national parade, Junkanoo. The discomfort Bahamians felt in the creation of the carnival reveals strains on our community posture that come from two directions. There is pressure on the one side from the wider world, particularly the expectations of the
North American tourist. Pressure on the other side comes from our region, the rest of the islands in the Caribbean. These forces are not simply binary however, as a closer look at either side reveals tensions within each one. The controversy surrounding the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival allows us a unique perspective to walk through all these tensions.

**Tourism and the Nation**

The Prime Minister’s decision to develop a carnival speaks to the way tourism forces Bahamians (and host communities at large) to be ever aware of, and to play to, the desires of their visitors. Christie stated baldly that he wanted a piece of the prosperity he saw Carnival bringing to Trinidad (Rolle-Brown 2014a and 2014c). The BNFC and the Minister of Youth, Sports, and Culture also told the public that the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival should be thought of as an economic stimulus, and the event was explained the way any businessperson would pitch a profitable venture. All of this is completely understandable given the role tourism plays in our economy, but in the sensitive realm of cultural heritage approaching these kinds of festivals with a strictly business mindset is hugely problematic.

Christie’s proposal – and the subsequent position of those responsible for the carnival – is hardly surprising, however. Carlos Fernandes explains that communities seldom take into account the social and environmental costs that may be associated with developing the tourism industry (2013: 27). He observes that hosts seek tourism development to “satisfy their economic, social and psychological needs, and to improve the community’s well-being,” yet “evidence suggests that in economically depressed regions, locals underestimate the cost of tourism development and overestimate the economic gains” (ibid: 32). In the case of The Bahamas, we see that the public is in fact expressing concern about the social and cultural consequences of
the Junkanoo Carnival; it is the government that is focusing primarily on its economic benefits. This is even after the chair of the Festival Commission admitted that the predicted $30 million economic spinoff was calculated merely by multiplying the amount of the government’s investment by a factor of 4 or 5 – the same as the world’s established carnivals – without tailoring the study to the economic climate of The Bahamas (G. Brown 2015b).

In the same article, Fernandes reviews literature asserting the importance of local institution building, local control of programs, and maximum involvement of the community in order for there to be sustainable tourism development. Thus, “cultural tourism cannot be successfully implemented without the direct support and involvement” of the stakeholders (2013: 33). With the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, not only was the majority not involved, they were actively against its development. The complete absence of these two factors – realistic assessment of consequences and local involvement – raises the question of how successful the carnival enterprise will be.

Although the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival was not meant to be a nationalizing project, in deciding how to craft it for tourists, it simultaneously became a discussion of nationhood. The carnival made Bahamians ask how we wanted to represent ourselves, which in turn made us wonder about ourselves as a people. Development of the carnival provided a forum for candid discussions on music, language, dress, and visual aesthetic, and was concomitantly an exercise in place-making. This transformation from tourism project to tourism and nation-building project is one that happens in many tourism-dependent nations, and was commented on by Jerome Camal. Through his study of the Festival Gwoka in Guadeloupe, he observed that in creating “either a nation or a destination, the
centripetal and centrifugal forces associated with nationalism and tourism provoke a reinterpretation of place” (2014: 214; cf. Hellier-Tinoco 2011).

Camal goes on to explain that both tourism and nationalism “rely on establishing a dialectic relation with a putative Other, […] they demand a careful balance between the need to affirm difference on one hand and to display some level of cosmopolitan fluency on the other” (ibid). Choosing a cultural showcase as a tourism-boosting product is an obvious example of establishing this dialectic. There was disagreement, however, between the public and the government on its details. Most Bahamians were protesting to maintain our uniqueness not just from visitors, but also from our Caribbean neighbors. The choices of the government point to attempts at smoothing over the differences in this latter category, which would make the nation and the newly developed carnival more palatable to tourists and their expectations for a Caribbean vacation.

Tourists often desire an ‘authentic’ experience, requiring hosts to negotiate how to produce this authenticity. This creates yet another “dialectic in which, on one hand, tourists’ expectations are shaped by exotizations and, on the other, destinations adapt to certain exoticist tropes to satisfy these expectations” (Camal 2014: 217). Again, in the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival the government focused on the idea of carnival rather than on the idea of Bahamian. How else to explain the elements that so offended Bahamians? Or the fact that at least one person – before the Machel Montano announcement – felt Trinidadian soca artists should have been brought in to provide entertainment, to make the event “more authentic” (Rashawnne Gardiner, Facebook conversation with author, March 2015)? Gibson and Connell explain that authenticity is a “social construction, firmly linked to political issues of who has the power to develop and promote particular presentations” (2005: 170). The Caribbean has long been imagined as a tropical paradise, warm and permissive, where the land,
the resources, and the people are open to visitors’ use: the quintessential place to
holiday (Sheller 2004). The decisions made for the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival
demonstrate the government pushing the version of carnival it thought would appeal
most to this narrative.

Underlying the relationship between Bahamians and tourists is the legacy of
colonialism, which adds depth and complexity to every issue. C. Michael Hall and
Hazel Tucker explain that tourism “both reinforces and is embedded in postcolonial
relationships. Issues of identity, contestation, and representation [central to
postcolonial studies] are increasingly recognized as central to the nature of tourism”
(2004: 2). It is of paramount importance for Bahamians to demonstrate their
capability and individuality as a nation after their history of colonial governance.
Michael Manley describes colonialism as a “period of cultural strangulation,”
resulting inevitably in a nation’s reduced self-confidence (1974: 145). Thus, if
postcolonial societies are to “re-establish self-confidence and re-embark upon the
process of self-discovery,” they must rediscover the validity of their own culture (ibid:
146). Being pressured to do otherwise for tourism or any other industry is
detrimental to this process.

After independence, “Bahamians who had always thought of themselves in
terms of British history and culture, suddenly had to see themselves as Bahamians,
but with no clear model for what that might mean” (Wisdom 1985: 77). This project
continues today. Although the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival was helpful in the sense
that it encouraged deliberation and debate, its effects are essentially subversive since
ultimately, decisions were made in service of tourists.

Manley asserts that these nations must return to the point of colonial intervention and retrace the
steps through history. This is not quite possible in The Bahamas since after the decimation of the
Lucayans there has always been a colonial presence. Nevertheless, the sentiment rings true.
To be fair, the carnival will spotlight Bahamian music and culture. Junkamania will highlight Junkanoo musicians in a way that has never been done before, and the Music Masters competition resulted in some wonderful new Bahamian songs and public awareness of several lesser-known Bahamian artists. Da Cultural Village will likely be the most celebratory of all things Bahamian with its collection and display of traditions from all the islands of the archipelago, something like a national version of the World’s Fair.

The fact remains, however, that the highest profile events hinge on non-Bahamian cultural factors. Although the BNFC failed to secure a Grammy award-winning headliner, until the very last minute much fuss was made about the glamorous status of this performer. Road Fever, the other event portrayed as most exciting, follows the tradition of masquerading in Trinidad Carnival. Even though some people, like myself, might feel inclined at this stage to give credit for the truly Bahamian elements, public perception of the event set long ago, and the Commission has created a product to which most Bahamians feel no affinity. As reported in the *Nassau Guardian*, it leaves many wondering: “Are we good enough, is there anything we have that someone else would value, are we smart enough, are our ideas clever enough?” (Dames 2015a).

These questions perfectly illustrate the legacies of colonialism that remain in Bahamian society, and the intimate connection between tourism and postcolonialism. In an interview with Arlene Nash-Ferguson, she suggested that in fact Bahamians are in a new kind of colonial present, where we are “allowing ourselves to be culturally colonized” by other territories (interview with author June 18, 2014). By this she meant that the “indoctrination that foreign is better” from the colonial period has carried over into our postcolonial present, and seems to be “an almost inherent perspective” among Bahamians. She made this statement in reference to the general influence of
our neighboring “cultural superpowers” on our culture (interview with author July 20, 2014). Ironically, this is the same rhetoric that I heard and read from people criticizing the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival.

The Region and the Nation

There is a strong influence from other Caribbean nations on Bahamian music, and culture in general. In our discussion of cultural colonialism, Nash-Ferguson gave as an example Bahamian singers imitating Jamaican accents in their music, and the large volume of Jamaican music on Bahamian radio stations. Trinidadian soca is also extremely popular among young Bahamians, and as I mentioned before, many Bahamians attend Trinidad Carnival. Jamaican and Trinidadian artists routinely visit The Bahamas to perform at packed concerts. Jamaican and Trinidadian food is also enjoyed by many Bahamians and is readily available on New Providence and Grand Bahama. This strong presence is in part because of the size of these nations and the success they have had in marketing themselves to the region. It is also because Caribbean people frequently move around the region for jobs, school, and family. There are many Bahamians with one or another parent from Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, Guyana, Barbados, and Dominica. It is very possible that each nation in the region is represented in the country, if not through family ties then because they have come to work in schools, businesses, or for the government.

With all of this mixing, it is unsurprising that Bahamian musicians have long been incorporating instruments and genres from the region into their music. In describing the vibrant entertainment scene in New Providence in the 1950s and 1960s, Rommen records musicians George Symonette, Eloise Lewis, and Peanuts Taylor

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81 She named the United States, Jamaica, Cuba, and Haiti as these superpowers. If I were asked to identify the cultural superpowers I would name the United States, Jamaica, and Trinidad.
incorporating rhythms and instruments from Cuba into their renditions of the song "Calypso Island" from the calypsonian LP *Bahamas Treasure Chest* (2014: 86, 88, 100).

As mentioned in chapter one, regional stars made regular appearances in nightclubs during this period, including Jamaican Byron Lee, Trinidadian Mighty Sparrow, and Cuban Perez Prado (ibid: 98).

These fluid and highly developed musical relationships are true of other islands in the Caribbean as well. Daniel T. Neely analyzes the way Jamaican musicians’ grafted "non-Jamaican forms like rumba, calypso, and Voodoo…onto Jamaican forms like mento" (2014: 39). Matthew J. Smith describes the close ties between Jamaicans and Haitians in the 1950s through their frequent exchanges of music, “informal gestures of cultural goodwill” – such as “Haitian writers, musicians, artists, and intellectuals visit[ing] Jamaica [and being] routinely fêted by the local literati” – and their inter-island holidays (2014: 129). He identifies the "1950-1951 tour of Haiti by Jamaica’s most popular band of the era, the twelve-piece Eric Deans orchestra,” as a landmark episode in the Haitian-Jamaican musical exchange (ibid: 132).

Learning about these kinds of ties, it is possible to wonder anew what it is about the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival that makes it so objectionable to Bahamians. Especially since this is not the first time The Bahamas and Trinidad have engaged in cultural exchange. In fact, “In the 1950s and 1960s, groups of Trinidadians often took part in the Junkanoo parades in Nassau. They wore Carnival-styled costumes, and were usually accompanied by steel bands,” although they never competed for prizes (Wood 1995: 244). The Trinidadian aesthetic made its way into Junkanoo in the 1980s, when group leaders began traveling to Carnival, sometimes on their own and twice sponsored by the government. It was these visits that precipitated the incorporation of tricks to Junkanoo costumes, and their initial appearance caused much controversy.
Nowadays, young Bahamians are unaware of this history, and tricks are viewed as part and parcel of the Junkanoo aesthetic. Recall from chapter two that the 1980s also introduced an “increased use of non-Bahamian melodies (particularly Trinidadian soca) in Junkanoo” (Wood 1995: 496).

What I found astonishing in my research, however, was that in 1982 two Junkanoo group leaders, Percy “Vola” Francis (Saxon Superstars) and Jackson Burnside III (One Family) “spoke of the potential for Junkanoo to grow into a week-long festival in the manner of Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Carnival in Trinidad, and Carnival in Brazil” (The Nassau Guardian 1982). This is almost verbatim the announcement that was made by the Prime Minister in May 2013, and by big names in the Junkanoo community. The two also proposed a “new national committee that would be made up of key civil service and private sector personnel,” much like the BNFC is today (ibid). Despite these similarities, however, their call and its attendant proposals placed Junkanoo at the center of the festivities, rather than an amorphous carnival event. Benjamin-Smith captured the nuances of the problem with the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival in this letter to readers:

No one is saying that carnival is bad. No one is saying that you can’t adapt some practices from a carnival-type event to enhance our own product. No one is saying that what we have now is perfect and that we shouldn’t improve upon the idea. Far from it. What we question is the wholesale adoption of certain and clearly foreign terminology, ideology, phrasing and packaging of the carnival idea as a whole. No matter what is being proffered, some aspects

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84 “On the one hand, some Junkanoos claim[ed] that tricks are not part of the Junkanoo aesthetic, and that costumes are so highly decorated that the beauty of the fringed crepe paper is lost. Furthermore, those who use tricks are no longer constrained to produce a high quality of fringe-work since tricks serve to hide flaws in pasting. Conversely, other Junkanoos counter that tricks add to the beauty of the costumes, and highlight the crêpe paper” (Wood 1995: 186-187).

85 As I mentioned in chapter three, Francis was appointed a member of the BNFC. There has not been a united front or official statement from the Junkanoo community on the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival. However, Francis was recently in the newspaper saying that he wished the event could be pushed back a year to allow for better preparation.

86 Francis and Burnside proposed the following for the committee’s possible objectives: to develop a festival experience for spectators and participants alike; to plan and develop routes, smooth circulation of groups, and additional decorations for parade areas; to provide exhibition facilities; to develop a pay Junkanoo scheme; to establish a national festival archives (The Nassau Guardian 1982).
of this event are foreign and false to our sensibilities. We are not actors; you can’t ask us to portray something we are not. (2014a)

It is not hard to imagine how, with an introductory announcement that used more open language, and with an approach to planning that was similarly open to input and collaboration, the government could have produced a season of events in which Bahamians were proud. As it is, the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival is a blatant appropriation of Trinidad’s Carnival. Not only does it undermine Bahamians’ identity building process, it also undermines our relationship with Trinidad and other countries in the Caribbean. As a nation, we work to belong to the community of Caribbean states, and at the same time to preserve what makes us distinct from the whole. It is a fine balance, and one where we have succeeded more so in social and cultural spheres than in political and economic ones. In commodifying Trinidad’s Carnival, the government shouts to our neighbors that we have no distinguishing culture of our own, and thus do not truly belong in the community.

**Agency and Appropriation**

As maddening and demoralizing as Bahamians found the government’s appropriation, its actions are not unprecedented, and examples of similar occurrences in the region can be found in history. In my earlier discussion of Bahamian and Jamaican musicians in the 1950s I withheld the fact that their decisions were strongly influenced and motivated by the tourism industry. Rommen explains that Bahamian musicians “needed to work within the expectations of a pan-Caribbean regional sound that arrived with the tourists” in order to be effectively heard, or appreciated by them (2011: 113). Similarly, Neely demonstrates that “the appropriation and assimilation of foreign styles was the basis for expressive diversity in Jamaica’s nightclubs and floor shows and a major reason for tourism’s success” (2014: 39). The
major difference between the actions of these musicians and the actions of The Bahamas government is agency. Neely explains that the Jamaican musicians chose to adapt their styles “because they fueled tourist interest and could help drive innovation in the industry” (2014: 39). Rommen explains that although Bahamian musicians were “[c]aricatured on the one hand and beloved on the other,” they “carefully negotiated both local and tourist tastes throughout their careers” (2011: 98). Moreover, the resulting “creative fusion was, according to [local musician] Count Bernadino, a conscious and calculated activity and one that was bound up in a dialogue with other Bahamians” (ibid: 99).

While artists in the Music Masters songwriting competition participated voluntarily, they did so strongly guided by the aesthetic predetermined by the government. The influence of this predetermination is demonstrated in other areas of carnival preparation as well. Remember that the original name for the event was “Bahamas Carnival,” which made no mention of local Bahamian cultural forms and immediately conjures thoughts of Trinidad Carnival. Additionally, images submitted by Bahamian graphic designers for the logo were rejected because they did not fit the BNFC’s vision. The image on the call for costume designers set the tone for the costume aesthetic, and most of the resulting Road Fever costumes look just like the illustration on the advertisement. The BNFC’s decisions, combined with the almost total disregard of the opinions and recommendations of Bahamian artists and musicians, made a lasting, and negative, impression. Musician K. Quincy Parker discussed this in an article written for Bahamian Art & Culture:

What is clear is that the government had already made up its mind that this was the path it wanted to take, for whatever reasons, and it came to the Bahamian people with what has been, in effect, a fait accompli – a done deal. I have spoken with a number of cultural actors in various arenas who have attempted to intervene, but all have come away with the realization that “this is going to happen.” There has been absolutely no chance that the cultural community could convince the government to choose another path. None.
So the semblance of consultation is a sham, and a lie. The government ought properly to simply admit that this was something the government intended to do, and that the cultural community’s comment was never really required, and proceed from there. That is a far more honest footing. (Parker 2014a)

As I mentioned in previous chapters, the government has successfully partnered with the Bahamian cultural community to create events that boost tourism without betraying the public. There was never an opportunity for a similar partnership to happen with the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival.

The examples of Bahamian and Jamaican musicians in the 1950s, and the contemporary Bahamian musicians and artists, display different patterns of appropriation and highlight the importance of agency in the creative process. In the former cases, adaptation occurred organically, in a way that appealed to both the artists and their public, not just their tourist audiences. The same cannot be said for the elements of the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival. Scale, too, is a relevant factor. Bahamian musicians incorporated pan-Caribbean musical logic to create what Rommen describes as a “goombay aesthetic,” something that was still recognizable to them and other Bahamians as local music. Jamaican musicians did the same to create what Neely calls a “modern mento,” which like the Bahamian example was still appreciated by Jamaicans. In contrast, the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival involves an almost “wholesale adoption” of Trinidad’s Carnival, and does not resonate with contemporary Bahamians.

While the level of offense differs greatly, the common thread in all these cases is tourism. Even with musicians making market-savvy decisions, their motivation points to the neocolonialist nature of the tourism industry in the region. This makes me wonder where the line is between the nature of doing business in the tourism industry, and the legacy of colonialism on life in general in the region. It seems as though there is no clear place such a line can be drawn, and thus, perhaps
they are inextricably entwined. Camal makes a similar observation at the conclusion of his analysis of the Festival Gwoka: “Overall, it could be that the combined centrifugal and centripetal forces that converge at the intersection of tourism and anticolonialist nationalism cannot be fully reconciled” (2014: 233).

Analyzing the development of the carnival also makes plain the relationship between culture, the economy, and national identity (cf. Gibson and Connell 2005). Culture and identity are in an obvious feedback loop. What this thesis reveals, however, is how the economy, specifically the tourism industry, is also intimately connected to allowed forms of cultural expression – here I refer to the development of Junkanoo – and to future forms of cultural expression – the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival. In a country where tourism is the number one source of income, even the things which are most intimate to ourselves are vulnerable to be called into service. This does not seem to be something that is questioned by the public, it just is. In fact, it occurred to me that if it were not for the copying of Trinidad Carnival, the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, masquerading as a Bahamian event while keeping true local culture away from the consumption and gaze of tourists, could be an effective way to combat neocolonial relationships and put more power into the hands of Bahamians in the host-visitor tourism dynamic. Yet this idea of protecting what was Bahamian from the forces of tourism never came up in anything I read or heard. Perhaps the nature of the host-visitor relationship prevents it from being an option.

This relationship prompts another question: How do Bahamians hold the government accountable to guard\textsuperscript{87} their culture and/or heritage? Is this even a reasonable question to ask? Considering the government instigated the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival, and aggravated the public in its unwillingness – for the most part – to receive criticism, we are a far way from an ideal stewardship scenario.

\textsuperscript{87}I am not asking about a strict preservationist model of guardianship, rather, a conscious and thoughtful management of our cultural resources with room for change and growth.
At the conclusion of his monograph *Funky Nassau: Roots, Routes, and Representation in Bahamian Popular Music*, Timothy Rommen says it has “become clear that the musical life of The Bahamas, as it currently stands, finds itself in considerable crisis” (2011: 264). He cites the changes in the ways tourists travel, the lack of political will to invest in the arts, and the near total disappearance of truly skilled musicians as contributors to this state of affairs, and says we will have to wait and see whether or not “a productive vision of the future can be articulated and then enacted” (ibid). Just four years after his publication, the government has most decidedly turned its attention towards the arts, and through The Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival has injected money and motivation into Bahamian musicians and other artists. However, this has happened in a way no one could have imagined, and with consequences that have yet to fully filter through the community. What we can see, is the slippery relationship between tourism and the Bahamian public: the things the government is prepared to ask Bahamians to do in service of the industry; the ways the public so readily adapts their lives for the industry; the ways questions about tourism become questions about ourselves. Each of these categories invite further study, as we seek to produce scholarship which engages all aspects of musical and cultural life. Music created for tourists can no longer be deemed less authentic or less worthy of study than music made without these motivations. Moreover, music made by people living immersed in tourism relationships, even if it is made without tourists in mind, cannot be treated as though it was untouched by their influence. This thesis helps demonstrate the densely interwoven relationships in tourism-oriented communities, relationships which ethnomusicologists are just beginning to uncover.
I am not sure exactly when, but at some point I realized that I really disliked tourism and the tourism industry. I felt sometimes as though I could not breathe, weighed down as I was by the brand of The Bahamas and non-Bahamians’ expectations of myself – how I should sound, the life story I should tell, the friendly and inviting persona I should adopt when discussing my nation. I do not know whether or not other Bahamians feel the same way, but I carried my share of the responsibility for the success of our tourism industry. As such, I avoided writing about anything tourism related in my school work, ethnomusicological or otherwise. Furthermore, tourism is so much a part of my life, it seemed that there were far more interesting and fruitful ways to spend my energy. As I mentioned in my introduction, the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival was not my first – or even second – choice for a research project. My work seemed to be the only place I could reasonably escape, and I fought to maintain my intellectual freedom. Yet, writing about the Bahamas Junkanoo Carnival came to be inevitable, and I was forced to contend with the scope of the tourism industry in my country and my life. This exercise has impressed upon me the value of this sort of study, not just for a more comprehensive literature, but for individuals like myself who make our lives in the midst of these complex relationships, who daily fight the battle of asserting ourselves in the world. Beyond the realm of academia, I would like to see candid, colloquial discussions on the role of tourism both in Bahamian society and in the Caribbean. These conversations are vital as we strive for total awareness of our postcolonial condition, thereby bringing us closer to meaningful independence.
Appendix A

Transcript from personal conversation with Maxwell Poitier, March 31, 2015

Gabrielle Misiewicz: Can you say that again? About rushing? And its role?

Maxwell Poitier: The idea of rushing is also a part of the New Year celebration in church. Traditionally it’s something that you did in church when you brought in the New Year. [Y]ou would rush around the church space, and into the yard, and back into the church, to celebrate the bringing in of the New Year. And that was a part of the Bahamian church culture. Especially in the Family Islands. Like, you would rush. And you know you’d sing and dance and praise and clap your hands and they actually attached that name to that activity. And it happened every New Year’s.

You would rush around the church?

Yea you would rush, and they called it rushing.

Were they costumed?

No, no, it wasn’t costumed.

Hmm, I’ve never heard of that before. How do you know about this?

That’s the part I was just about to tell you. On ZNS, I think it was back in, this was back in the mid-90s they had a short interview with a, with uh, she would have been in her 70s at the time so she’s probably dead. This was an older lady who lived in Andros and she was talking about, they were talking about some of the early forms of Junkanoo. And she was talking about how when she was a child, rushing was associated with church it had nothing to do with this Junkanoo thing.

Hmm. But this is mainly on the Family Islands.

Mainly on the Family Islands yes but realize, a lot of people from New Providence would’ve come from the Family Islands and would’ve been rooted in that culture.

Yea, when there were economic depressions.

Right.

Maybe that’s where they got that word from ‘cause that was always unclear to me.

Yea, no but, she was arguing that’s where the word came from.

Ohhh.

It came from this particular activity that was done in church on New Year’s Day and that’s why it translated so easily to Junkanoo ‘cause they took it up on New Year’s as

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88 ZNS – Zephyr Nassau Sunshine – are the call letters for The Bahamas’ national television and radio station.
well. And I think that’s... I guess you could also make a connection between New Year’s Day parade and Junkanoo parade right?

Yea!

Sorry, New Year’s Day parade and the whole rushing on New Year’s in church.

Yea.

[discussion about possibility of finding a copy of the broadcast]

Wow! How do you even remember that?

What do you mean how do I even remember that? It was a fascinating piece of our culture! I still remember the lady, she had this really weird kinda… they did the two-step. That same two-step thing you see the old Junkanooers do, they did that. And, she um, she’s very traditional, always have her head wrap when she goin’ to church and they even recreated it, her and her family, and ZNS filmed it. They showed them in the little island church doing the rush out and she said how it would go on for so long. Like you would have to, it wouldn’t just be like a 15-minute thing it would go on for quite some time. And she said, “Oh yea chile I used to rush all day! All day! So excited to rush!”

That is amazing, really, and I wonder that I’ve never heard about it before. How old were you when you – I guess I shouldn’t be surprised that you remember because I don’t think I’m ever going to forget this now, but how old were you when you saw it?

I had to have been about um 12. 12 or 13. Actually no it might have been younger than that. ‘Cause I think that might have come on ZNS when it was the only station. No, no it was newer than that. It was newer than that. I think cable was around by then.

Maxwell was born in 1984.
Appendix B

Text from the *Ace of Spades* exhibit at the National Art Gallery of The Bahamas

On a wall in the southeast corner of the exhibit were these quotes, collected from Bahamian artists, educators, Junkanooers, and politicians. At the top of the wall were the words “Junkanoo Is….”

- Junkanoo is a successful marriage of the visual and performing arts, which allows thousands of Bahamians to express their talent and abilities. – Elkino Dames
- The physical embodiment of Bahamian spirit and culture; unadulterated, raw and uncut!!! – Edrin Chris Symonette
- Junkanoo is the heart and soul of the Bahamian people. It is the visualization of what freedom really means to us and our expression of life. ArtisLife. – Walter Gardiner
- Spiritually Enchanting! – Nadine Munroe
- It’s the rhythmic beat of the goat skin drum, A [sic] visual feast of color, It’s [sic] chanting, crowds pulsating, And [sic] the sweet smell of smoke, alcohol and sweat.” – Georgette L. Turnquest
- “Junkanoo is the beautiful art of showing what love sounds like, what joy feels like, how dance rolls away pain and how expression of our nation can elevate it’s [sic] people.” – Leah Eneas
- “The sound of the goat skin drums touch my soul! Feel what I feel.” – Chantal E. Y. Bethel
- “Junkanoo is the festival of sounds that unite us. The time when Bahamians can take off and show talent!” – Ashley Cooper
- “Junkanoo is an emotion! That feeling that overtakes your soul when you’re hit in the face with the art, dance, and music. Excitement would look like melancholy if it stood next to “JUNKANOO.” – Allan Pachino Wallace
- “Color, movement and reverberation – a blend of unique culture and curious history.” – Jacki Boss
- “Junkanoo: a spirit that is ignited by heartbeats, powered by beautiful minds & manifested through music, vibrant costumes & dance!” – Élspeth D. Jackson
- “A form of african [sic] art, music and dance which has been transformed into the main cultural enterprise of The Bahamas.” – Brian Adderley
• Junkanoo...gift from the ancestors...in our veins...erupting in joyous dance, pounding drums, ringing bells. Junkanoo...spirit of a people. – Silbert and Arlene Nash-Ferguson

• Junkanoo is the greatest combination of the creative and performing arts. Pure artistic excellence where the street is its stage.” – Ronald Simms

• “The stone that the builder rejected, the complete and comprehensive liberation of our mind, body and soul; searching the canopy of Heaven for home; upon the backs of our unique song, dance and ritual, arriving at the discovery of our emotional, intellectual, social, economic, spiritual and cultural mythology I AM A JUNKANOO” – The Hon. Dr. Daniel Johnson, MP Minister of Youth, Sports and Culture

• “Junkanoo is based on the traditions of its unique music and vibrant costume designs. This tradition has developed and has transformed into something uniquely ours and it is one that we should be proud. We should remember those that have contributed to our culture that have passed along with those who are now carrying on this torch.” – Al Collie

• “Junkanoo is the singular cultural art form that can further expose The Bahamas to the outside world. Its creative beauty, unique rhythmicsounds, and indigenous dance personifies the true Bahamian spirit.” – “Sandy” Sands

• “Spectacular! It’s a feeling synonymous with Love. Once you see and feel it, you can’t get rid of it, it makes you move.” – Hon. Dr. Hubert A. Minnis, MP, Leader of Her Majesty’s Loyal Opposition

• “A divine celebration of self and traditions. An art form ever evolving through inspirations both innate and foreign and possessing infinite creative possibilities.” – Jolyon Smith

• “Junkanoo is a celebration. Junkanoo represents the spirit of the Bahamian culture, and it is this spirit......that will provide the leadership of our society in the future.” – Jackson L. Burnside III (1949-2011)

• “I enjoy a good rush out, pulsating and rhythmic sound of the drums; the rhythm brings me to my feet.” – Luann Morris.

• “In ya belly!” – Penelope Nottage
The following quotes were selected from several that were pasted each in their own little alcove in the center of the exhibition:

- Junkanoo, for Bahamians, is the ultimate national symbol. A street festival of West African origin held at Christmastime, it represents poverty and wealth, discipline and rebellion, competition and cooperation, creative genius and physical prowess. It is simultaneously viewed as the quintessential Bahamian self-conception and the best face turned to the visitor. Like street festivals everywhere, it can be classified as a ritual of rebellion, a politico-cultural movement, or an annual innovation. As a marker of identity, however, it provides Bahamians with a means of reflecting on current issues and criticising social ills, while at the same time offering to tourists a spectacle full of color, movement and sound; and it encompasses the ideals of family, neighborhood and social commitment while accommodating individual self-expression.
  – Dr. Nicolette Bethel

- The Junkanoo festival of The Bahamas is a yuletide tradition known today as the country’s most ecstatic out-pouring of creative ingenuity, and can be described as one of the world’s most colourful festivals, with elaborate costumes of kaleidoscopic patterns made from cardboard and decorated with colours of fringed crepe paper. The pulsating rhythmic sounds of goat-skin drums, the ringing of cowbells, the blaring of fog horns and the melodic tunes of brass instruments combined with whistles together make up the thunderous, mesmeric and hypnotic sounds of Junkanoo. The vigorous free-spirited dance movements of strutting, shuffling and stepping are all a part of this grand phenomenon.

  Junkanoo can be summed up as a celebration of life for Bahamians.
  – Percy “Vola” Francis, “King of Junkanoo”
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