

The unifying power of Carnival

WE ARE deep in the Carnival season. We know it as the greatest show on earth or the mother of all carnivals! We have been witnessing the spectacular shows, energetic fetes and in one week, the parade of the bands. What we are also witnessing is the unifying power of Carnival in our nation.

Carnival is a unique expression of our culture that encapsulates music, dance, costumes, pageantry and performance. While it is celebrated in various styles and with slightly different names throughout the greater Caribbean, there is one common thread: it has a unique ability to unite people no matter your age, sex, religion, ethnicity or geographic origin.

Take J'Ouvert morning for instance; in the capital city and its environs there is a sea of oneness chipping down the road. There is no recognition of our differences, only togetherness amongst complete strangers. The harmony and happiness that surround Carnival and engulf almost the entire population have the same effect as sports. Both bring out the best in us and unify us.

This same unity witnessed on J'Ouvert morning is mirrored throughout all our Carnival celebrations including Monday mas, Tuesday mas and las lap.

It is noteworthy to mention that the lyrics in our soca music also contribute immensely to this togetherness.



For example, songs such as “All ah we is one family” and “We are one people under the sun, one nation, under the Lord” encourage us to love and respect one another as well as to unify us as a people.

In addition, the Road March 2019, Famalay, echoes, “We doh see skin, we doh see colour, we see strength, we see power, we doh see race one or de other, once he is breathing on dis earth he is meh brother.” These lyrics truly exemplify a line in our national anthem that says “here every creed and race finds and equal place.”

Just as the Carnival celebration advances this nationwide unity, the Equal Opportunity Commission (EOC) continues to be the leading state advocate. We remain steadfast in our efforts to promote unity, equality and inclusion through our mandate to work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of equality and good relations between people of different status.

The EOC is guided by a dynamic piece of legislation called the Equal Opportunity Act. This act seeks to

protect people against discrimination as it relates to four categories: employment, education, the provision of goods and services and the provision of accommodation.

Under the act, citizens are entitled to equality and fair treatment, despite their status. The seven status grounds, or what can be referred to as inherent characteristics, covered by the act are race, ethnicity, religion, marital status, origin including geographical origin, disability and sex.

A person who believes that they have been subjected to discrimination in any of the above areas may lodge a complaint with the EOC. The EOC investigates every complaint lodged at its office. Services at the EOC are free of charge up until the stage of conciliation. Bear in mind that the EOC is not a court of law that makes determinations or gives interpretations under the act.

While there are many factors that contribute to the overall growth of a nation, it is clear that the elimination of discrimination and promotion of inclusivity is a key element that fosters unity. So, let us stay together and help support one another in times of adversities. If we remember that “unity is strength” and “united we stand, divided we fall,” we will surely build a stronger society and successful people.

Have a safe and enjoyable Carnival, Trinidad and Tobago.