

Here's what's right and wrong about Brooklyn's annual Labor Day carnival

List includes tireless efforts of West Indian American Day Carnival Association and media inaccuracies about crime at event



NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2012, 4:00 AM



Revelers perform during last year's West Indian American Day Parade in Brooklyn.

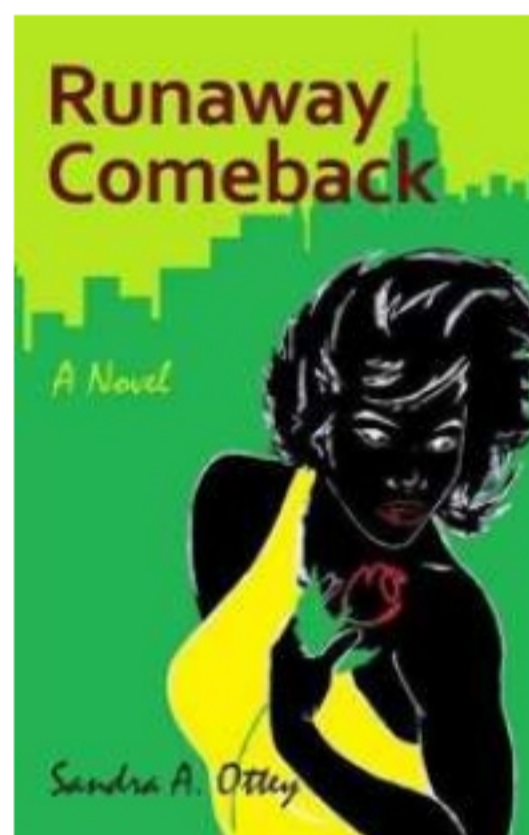
Prompted by two examples of doing the right thing by the West Indian American Day Carnival Parade, I've compiled a long list of right things and a single wrong about the annual event, which takes place tomorrow along Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn.

My first "did the right thing" instance is the NYPD's disciplining 17 officers who posted racist and offensive comments about the parade on Facebook last year.

The second instance was carnival organizers recently completing the payment of long-awaited prize money to last year's Panorama winners.

With that, here is my list of carnival rights and wrongs:

Right: West Indian American Day Carnival Association President Thomas Bailey and the organization's newly-constituted board are right in their tireless effort to pull off carnival despite hard economic times, shrinking corporate support and some internal conflicts including the resignation of longtime president Yolanda Lezama-Clark in December.



Queens writer Sandra Ottey's second novel "Runaway Comeback" follows exploited heroine Rose Thorn.

Right: WIADA should be praised for touting the 2004 state Economic Development Corp. figures — \$154.8 million in economic impact — from a 2004 study and encouraged to get annual statistics on just how much money the event and its patrons bring to the city annually. Millions in purchases are made from New York wholesalers and retail firms. Hundreds of small businesses sell every piece of food and beverage in stock to parade patrons, and carnival visitors spend loads of money on hotels, restaurants, Broadway shows and other city attraction.

Right: Biz Bash, America's leading events planning publication which caters to corporations and small businesses, is totally correct to consistently rank the Brooklyn carnival high on its list of "Parades, Festivals and Holiday Events." The Eastern Parkway extravaganza is listed No. 3, behind the grand Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade and the iconic New Year's Eve in Times Square celebration, respectively

Right: After a media feeding frenzy wrought with inaccuracies about crime at the 2011 parade, it was great last year to hear Police Commissioner Kelly say Labor Day carnival will continue to be held. Crime, not carnival, is the problem. The incidents on the parade route last year were among dozens of incidents which took place throughout the city over Labor Weekend. Unfortunately, the carnival, like the rest of the New York, is adversely affected by the city-wide violence, but it's certainly not the cause of crime.

Right: Respected, longtime Caribbean community leader Desmond Chase was right when he called for more respect for steelbands in an open letter posted recently on the When Steel Talks website. The musical ensembles, along with the creative mas costumes, are the core of the big parade. But a big portion of Chase's letter was focused on financial accountability and transparency from WIADCA to alleviate the group's current "financial straightjacket."

This year, WIADCA has asked the public for donations to help run the carnival and association programs.

Right: Most recently, Trinidad and Tobago-born arts advocate Roger French shared his hope that hip-hop's Nicki Minaj and pop singer Rhianna would pitch in to financially aid Labor Day carnival. He also started an effort to raise funds for WIADCA.

Right: Earlier this year, Caribbean Guyana Institute for Democracy President Rickford Burke, who had "grave concerns about the future of the parade," floated a proposal to create of an Interim Carnival Authority "to oversee, direct and manage carnival 2012." The proposal, shared with a host of Brooklyn politicians and community leaders, was not enacted, but it did mention "WIADCA's possible inability to retain the confidence of sponsors given lingering perceptions, justifiable or unfounded that last year's parade was violent."

Yes, Burke was right to express his group's concerns about the carnival and he was on the money about the significant issue the perception of crime has at the event.

Which brings me to the big wrong connected with the carnival parade.

Wrong: The mainstream media coverage, which is consistently faulty and misleading, too often portrays the parade as a magnet for crime.

And get the facts straight when reporting criminal incidents on Labor Day in Brooklyn. Don't attribute far-flung incidents, occurring other neighborhoods, to the parade. That's just plain wrong!

The Dimanche Gras show of music and costumes takes place tonight at 6 p.m. on the Brooklyn Museum grounds. Visit wiadca.com for more on the carnival.

New tome from Ottey

Queens author Sandra Ottey is back on the bookshelves with her latest novel "Runaway Comeback."

Her second fiction work follows exploited heroine Rose Thorn from native Jamaica to the U.S. to attain her educational goals and her soul mate in the midst of "secrets, payback, and redemption."

Ottey, whose first novel was "Jamerican Connection" is working on her third book. For information, send email at sandra.ottey@yahoo.com and visit the author's web site: andraottey.com.