

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Carefree Spirit Takes Hold In Charlotte Amalie As Thousands Pack Waterfront For 2019 J'ouvert Celebration

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Jouvert Morning 2019 in St. Thomas

ST. THOMAS -- The streets of downtown Charlotte Amalie was soaking wet on Thursday morning. It was also doused with all kinds of party paints, and partygoers were eager to splatter the harmless colorant on carefree revelers whose moods were too jubilant to be bothered by such distractions.

The music enticed Virgin Islanders from all walks of life -- along with visitors -- who moved with the tempo of Soca rhythms both local and foreign. Some hugged each other as they danced down the road. Others were more expressive; some women bent their backs and threw back their behinds seductively while men -- and women -- with permission pushed forward attempting to keep pace. It's a form of wining, as it's called in the Caribbean.

Others moved alone, jumping and waving and "freeing up" themselves, another Caribbean lingo that translates to the enjoyment of oneself following a stressful period, or, simpler, a well-deserved break from the daily grind of life.

From one end of the waterfront of Charlotte Amalie to the other, the only visible sight was a sea of bodies moving to Soca music. The rain poured, but nobody cared; onlookers watched, but revelers didn't notice; the sun later struck, but not a soul was bothered by the heat.

All people wanted to do, and did, today was enjoy themselves in the largest annual street party known as J'ouvert Morning, a celebration that is part of the culture of carnivals all over the Caribbean.

<https://www.facebook.com/viconsortium/videos/402216743705227/>

The rise of social media brought along with it selfie-taking, and the practice was not in short supply this morning, with groups of individuals striking poses, saving the moment.

J'ouvert Morning, pronounced "jouvey morning" which originated from the French words jour ouvert, or day opening, gets its origin in the 1700s, a time of slavery in the Caribbean when slaves were banned from the French masquerade balls. The enslaved would host their own carnivals in their backyards using their heritage while imitating and mocking their masters' behavior.

Carnival in the Caribbean has a storied and complicated past. It is tied to colonialism, religion and ultimately freedom and celebration. According to Trip Savvy, citing historians, carnival originated with Italian Catholics in Europe, and it later spread to the French and Spanish, who brought the pre-Lenten tradition with them when they settled (and brought slaves to) Trinidad, Dominica, Haiti, Martinique, and other Caribbean islands.

The word "Carnival" itself is thought to mean "farewell to meat" or "farewell to flesh," the former referencing the Catholic practice of abstaining from red meat from Ash Wednesday until Easter, the historians said. The latter explanation, while possibly fictitious, is said to be emblematic of the sensuous abandon that came to define the Caribbean celebration of the holiday.

With the end of slavery in the Caribbean 1834, what was a backyard party blew into the open and became a focal point of Caribbean culture, with a general theme but various forms all over the islands, displaying emancipation through music, elaborate costumes, exotic dancing (wining), Lapo kabrit, masquerades, Jab Jab, and much more.

https://www.instagram.com/p/Bw9uj0Alm68/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

Today's celebration was part of St. Thomas' 67th carnival. It was followed by a wet fete event at the Carnival Village that was scheduled to commence at 10:00 a.m. and end at 1:00 p.m.

The festivities continue tonight at the Village with artists such as Skinny Fabulous, whose hit song "Famalay" with artists Machel Montano and Bunji Garlin is the top trending Soca song for 2019, winning roach march in Trinidad earlier this year, and receiving millions of views in record time on YouTube.

On Friday morning, the territory's youth will parade on Main Street for the Children's Parade, which is scheduled to start at 10:00 a.m., followed by the Adults Parade on Saturday.

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