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Thousands Descend on Frederiksted for the 2020 J'ouvert Morning Event

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St. Croix J'ouvert By. Reemy-Reemz Photography and Cinematography

ST. CROIX — Virgin Islanders enjoyed another safe J'ouvert (daybreak in French), event on St. Croix, where residents of the islands and visitors alike amassed in the wee hours of Wednesday morning for hours of partying in the streets of downtown Frederiksted. Led by a number of J'ouvert troupes and bands, revelers danced in the streets as if letting go of their cares for a moment.

Just like [last year's event](#), the 2020 street party was free of violence and, just like last year, brought out throngs of revelers.

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.

Wednesday's celebration was part of St. Croix's' 67th festival.