

THE SUNSHINE AWARDS

P.O. Box 3717, Teaneck, New Jersey 07666 * (201) 836-0799 * Fax (201) 836-4440

www.sunshineawards.com

News Release

Contact: ***Kanchan Paser***
201-836-4440

For Immediate Release

Standing Ovation in the Cayman Islands for Co-founder of Sunshine Awards Hall of Fame

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**New Jersey, USA, May 9, 2007** ----- Today, the Sunshine Awards organization released the complete text of Dr. Hollis Chalkdust Liverpool's lecture, which was delivered at the Harquail Theatre in the Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands on April 25, 2007. The lecture was part of the Cayfest Annual Distinguished Lecture Series organized by the Cayman National Cultural Foundation. Dr. Liverpool is the co-founder of the Sunshine Awards Hall of Fame established in 1989 and an Associate Professor of History at the University of the Virgin Islands.

The theme of Dr. Liverpool's lecture was "**Kaiso: The Defining Art Form of Regional Integration.**" It was reported that at the end of the lecture Dr. Liverpool received a sustained standing ovation. Past Lecturers who participated in this series were writer Derek Walcott and designer/choreographer Peter Minshall.

Gil Figaro, Sr, Founder of the Sunshine Awards said, "*I am very proud of Chalkie. His extensive research has enabled him to document, for the benefit of today's and future generations, the history of calypso, as well as its social and political value to society.*"

The following is the complete text of Dr. Liverpool's lecture:

### **Kaiso: The Defining Art Form of Regional Integration**

**By Hollis Urban Liverpool**

**Cayman Islands, April 25, 2007**

Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen! It is a pleasure to be invited to speak on a most important topic in my humble estimation, that of regional integration. What makes the topic a most enjoyable one is the fact that it encompasses

the art form of calypso, which as everyone knows, is one that I eat, sleep and breathe daily. I hope at the end of my presentation that all here present will note and understand better this rather bold thesis statement, namely, that the calypso is the defining art form of regional integration. All calypsonians, like good teachers, know that if your audience is lost during your presentation, your offering will lack interest and will inevitably fall on deaf ears. Moreover, should your presentation lack interest, you will be disliked as a calypsonian and you won't reach very far in the calypso world. Therefore, lest you the audience be lost, let me first define my parameters.

When we speak of regional integration, we speak chiefly of the need to integrate those Windward and Leeward Islands, as well as the Greater Antilles, and the Caymans in the Caribbean chain. All these islands were formerly owned by the British, French, Dutch, Danes and Spaniards during the eras of colonialism and imperialism, and they existed mainly to supply their metropolitan masters with tropical produce, or to serve as playgrounds for rich Europeans. Separated geographically, and politically belonging to different metropolitan owners, the islands gave rise to political and economic systems that made the islanders insular in their thinking, to the extent that some assumed that they were higher up the ladder of wealth, status and respectability than others. This self-ranking status allowed our islanders to degrade others through jokes, songs, calypsoes, name calling, trade regulations and even discriminatory laws.

As time progressed however, and more and more Caribbean persons became educated, and as more and more of them crossed the economic, social and political pathways of one another, they saw the need for integration in the islands, to counter the negative forces spread by enslavement, indenture, colonialism and neo-colonialism. Such negative forces served then to make the region a most disparate one. As more and more of our people became educated too, we began to walk with a different view as we saw the need to bring our peoples together, despite the different metropolitan owners of the islands, despite the various political systems that existed, despite the various rungs reached on the constitutional ladder, despite the different languages spoken and despite the existing social and economic institutions. Regional integration then, like development, is not so much about the integration of existing infra structure or legal political systems in the islands, as much as it concerns the coming together of the peoples of the region, as a worthy step towards greater human development.

The second area or parameter to be defined in this talk this evening is that of calypso, but to understand the calypso, one must first understand its social significance. This means that we must first define culture and the role of culture in the region generally. What is culture?

All of us are familiar with the work of Edward Tylor, A.L.Kroeber and Alfred Mayer and countless anthropologists on this subject. While they have confused many a student, their work point to the fact that there is no single definition of culture, for some are concerned with the ideological while others favour the practical and analytical. For, as M.G. Smith pointed out, culture is also connected with social ideas. It thus follows that any attempt to define or understand culture must take into account the content and function of such ideologies. It follows then that all countries, including the Cayman Islands, have culture, it being an abstraction of the behaviour and customs of the people. Sociologists have shown that it is derivative as well as transmissible, while historians are quick to point out that it is, to a large extent, the product of a people's history. I have long come to the conclusion that because of our common history of enslavement, indenture and colonialism, there is an overriding Caribbean culture in the region, and that the minor differences between Trinidad, Martinique, Tortola and the Cayman Islands are mere manifestations of different political systems and metropolitan affiliations.

So, some of us prefer the breadfruit boiled, some roasted, some stewed in oil down, some fried, but all of us Caribbean people yet savour this food of our enslaved brothers and sisters. Similarly, for Tobagonians, the breadfruit is called the Cow; Trinidadians say Pembois; St Lucians say Bwapen, Dominicans Yanmpen, and while Barbadians say “yuh breadfruit hang low,” meaning you are very vulnerable, all of us seeing Lara bat and making a century say: “He seeing the ball big like a breadfruit.” Only a Caribbean man can truly understand that phrase. Our history thus shows that we have taken British, French, and Danish. and Spanish culture, changed what we felt needed to be changed, kept what we considered useful, denounced what we disliked and added our Africanisms and East Indianisms. Such changes facilitated our ability to integrate, since we all have produced an overarching, creolized culture in the Caribbean.

As part of that creolized culture, we have produced the calypso. In forming it, we took the basics from Africa and added to it our Caribbean flair and circumstance and have used it all over the Caribbean as an agent of integration. It is now the music of the British and formerly British-owned islands, as well as the US Virgin Islands. It has a rhythm of its own; it respects no one, yet it is responsible to all. It pulls the feathers off the wings of the elite and our leaders so that they may fly an ordinary pitch. It deceives foreigners into believing that we are a fun loving and a not-too-serious people when in fact, we are angry, laughing men and women. So we sing: “Rum and Coca Cola, Way down Pt. Cumana.” Foreigners see the rum and sometimes the coca cola. We continue to however sing: “Both mother and daughter, working for the Yankee dollar.” Probably you will understand what is calypso better if you listen to Duke:

*“What is calypso? I’m sure you really don’t know.  
I wonder if you know the true meaning of calypso.  
Because the words that we rhyme and sing – is only half the thing.  
I could tell you that – calypso is more than a work of art.  
Ch. It is a feeling which comes from deep within;  
A tale of joy, or one of suffering.  
It’s an editorial in song of the life that we undergo  
That and only that, I know, is true calypso.*

*Now you must admit- there is nothing quite like it.  
From West Africa, they brought out forefather  
Who had to toil and slave in the field all day,  
But while they did they were chanting their own lavway  
Bout how Massa treat dem bad  
And so calypso began here in Trinidad.*

*Ch. So it has a rhythm unto itself alone;  
A native beat - bi didip - all our very own.  
It is a way of life, a way of love, from centuries ago  
Our folk art, I know, must be Calypso.*

Now that you understand our parameters, you must at this juncture know firstly before we look at the role of calypso, that there have been many negative forces over the years that have worked towards the non-integration of our peoples. As early as the period of enslavement, language as promoted by our European landlords brought about divisiveness among the enslaved. All of us know how during enslavement the enslaved were either transferred or sold when they were found easily conversing with those who were branded ringleaders. After emancipation, language was used to continue to divide the freed. Encouraged to converse and communicate in the language of the metropolitan owner, we discriminated against those who

spoke differently. Thus in post-emancipation times, we in Trinidad laughed at everybody who was different. We refused to give any status to the creolized tongue of the Caribbean people. In fact we laughed at the accents of people of another island, while trying desperately to mimic that of the colonizer. We gave our children in school colloquialisms and asked them to translate our patois into good English. Even the calypso that is today, in my humble and respectful opinion, the defining art of integration captured that negative force. We ridiculed Grenadians in song thus: “Go far eet, go far eet, go far eet in the bound-arie” (repeat). And “Ah want two sheet.” We showed our resentment of Barbadians thus: “Why dem Barbadians pack up in this land. I am begging the immigration, to do the best they can.” When the small islanders were being sent home from Trinidad, we sang:

*“Move let me get mi share – they beating Grenadians in Woodford Square.  
Ah must pelt a lash let me get mi share- they holding Grenadians in Woodford  
Square.  
Since they hear we got federation – all o’ them pack up here in the island.  
Immigration putting them on a test; - the policemen teasing dem on arrest.*

*Ch. If you see how they holding the scamps and dem friends you bound to bawl  
Some o’ dem could read and spell but they can’t pronounce at all.  
The policeman telling them ‘say pig’ you stupid man  
And as they say ‘Hag’ – straight inside the van.”*

Or Blakie singing:

*“Send dem back to dey land (all dem Bajans)  
Send dem back to dey land (dem Grenadians)  
Ah talking as man – to allyuh Immigration.  
Ah can’t take the jam – the place too ramcram  
So before the thing explode – Mama take yuh bundle and go.”*

The second negative force was the insularism that the different political systems produced. In terms of constitutional maturity, we in the English-owned territories left the French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish islanders and felt that they were an inferior people. We taught our children that Martinique and Aruba were crown colonies and that Jamaica, Barbados and Trinidad were superior to crown colonies in terms of development and education. We honestly felt that crown colonies were backward in every respect and so when our leaders met around the table for discussion, those from Jamaica and Trinidad sat or strolled with an air of dominance over the smaller islands. This insularism was seen in the Federation of the British West Indies and caused, to a certain extent, its downfall.

As a fall out from the different political systems, we produced or accepted different monetary systems: another negative force to further negate the movement towards integration. Thus nearly each island had its own monetary system and monetary value particularly after independence. Worse yet, monies from Trinidad could not be spent in any other island. Up to this day, Trinidadian currency bills are not legal tender in Barbados, Jamaica and nearby Grenada. Banks in these territories will accept the bills in terms of transactions, but not the coins. However, in the estimation of the people the Trinidad dollar is unacceptable. I have in jest offered the Trinidad dollar to various establishments and have heard them say repeatedly “dat ent good.” I have sought to give away the Trinidad dollar to people up the islands only to hear them describe it as “play money” while turning down my offer. It is a truism that no Trinidadian will accept a Jamaican money bill—not even the bank—but for a different reason: the value of the

Jamaican and Guyanese dollar. The monetary value of a country's money in the Caribbean varies, in accordance with its being pegged to the English pound or the US dollar.

This monetary regard of an island's dollar is more cause for confusion and inevitably non-integration, for some people, not understanding the system whereby the money is valued, feel that Barbados money higher than Trinidad etc. Further ignorance is shown when some people honestly believe that they are better off than others because their money is valued higher than another. **(Pride)** The irony of it all—as I sang in a calypso—is that all the islands want Trinidadian money, but “you can't spend a TT dollar in their country.” If you're hungry in Barbados or in the US Virgin Islands, and you only possess TT dollars, crapaud smoke yuh pipe, to use a good old Trinidadian saying. Because of these differing monetary standards, most Trinidadian calypsonians will only appear in Guyana or in Jamaica on condition that they are paid in US dollars, and before the show to booth.

Another negative force produced by our different political systems is that of the passport and the visa for traveling and for entering another man's territory. I recall Lord Blakie in St Thomas telling me in the 70s how his Antiguan-born wife was detained in Antigua by immigration authorities, and he, an American citizen, had to intercede on her behalf to get her through the difficulty. It took the World Cup 2007 to get some Caribbean countries to relax their laws on visas and passports and allow West Indians to pass freely. Before that, as you know, there was a time in the Caribbean when Americans using their drivers' licenses whizzed through our airports while West Indians had to produce passports and in some cases, visas for entry.

Our different educational systems too, have forced us as Caribbean peoples to find solace and some degree of equity in the US and London, rather than in Trinidad and the Virgin Islands. Students from Trinidad and the Caymans, for example, cannot readily access the University of the Virgin Islands that caters especially for the American system. Similarly, students from the US Virgin Islands need Advanced level certificates from the CXC, a different system to theirs, to enter the University of the West Indies. The UVI is under-utilized and has lots of spaces for Caribbean students; the American education system as well as the need to obtain an American visa prevents students of the English and French-Speaking islands from taking advantage of the opportunity. On the other hand, the University of the West Indies is over filled; it presently has little room for students who do not obtain A's at Advanced level examinations. Besides the entrance qualifications, the both systems aim to produce graduates to fulfill different employment practices, different ways of doing business, a different outlook on life, and consequently, a further fall into the doldrums of non-integration; a further widening of the gap that divides us. One underscores the American way of living; the other seeks to institute the bureaucratic and governmental systems of Britain.

To this overarching field of education, we can add language, for as owned and manipulated by different owners, we saw our close neighbours through the eyes of the metropolis. We refused, if we were English, to teach our students conversational Spanish and vice-versa, thereby allowing many of them to grow up with ignorant and in most cases, prejudiced minds.

The situation is laughable, if it wasn't so serious, for Trinidad, a mere seven miles away from the continent of South America, is only now introducing conversational Spanish to some students, not all. The fact is that our people, ignorant of one another's tongue, have grown up trading and associating with the European and American metropolis, rather than with Latin America and the wider Caribbean. The language bug has so affected our Caribbean way of life that business men import expensive goods from New York rather than the cheaper ones from

nearby Costa Rica, St. Maarten and Mexico; business men and private persons pay less telephone rates for calls made to London than for calls to destinations within the Caribbean. So poor was our telephone service a few years ago, so made chiefly to facilitate foreigners, that there was a time in Trinidad when to get a telephone call for Person A to speak to person B in a village a mere five miles away, we used to call a friend C in New York and asked that person C to call B in Trinidad and relay the communication. In other words, it was cheaper and easier to speak to persons in New York than to communicate by telephone within the island. It is important to note that the language barrier did not start in year 2007; rather, plantation owners introduced it in the era of enslavement to ensure that the enslaved would not mix with nearby plantations and thus be better controlled. Today, thanks to language, Antiguans know very little of their neighbours Martinique and Guadeloupe, while Guyana is seemingly off limit to neighbouring Aruba and Bonaire. I have a standing joke in my Caribbean history classes at university over the years. I ask students on the first day of the class to go to the blackboard and on a map show me the Turks and Caicos Islands. The young students usually search all over the Pacific straining their weary eyes to find it.

Let us at this juncture, turn our attention to those agencies and agents that forge some sort of integration among Caribbean people. First, there are our tertiary institutions such as UWI and UVI that have, at a certain level, educated our people, thereby helping the educated few to throw off the shackles of colonialism and imperialism and don the armour of togetherness. There is too, the CXC which was set up in 1973, but which has not been accepted by all. Then we have, through inter-island travel using our national airlines, promoted a greater understanding of one another. In this area, our higglers and small-scale businessmen have brought us a bit closer by trading their nationally-produced goods with one another, and by helping us to see that our accents are beautiful, even if we don't understand our neighbour's creole. In St. Thomas, for instance, young school girls, trying to get home after classes, tell drivers on an afternoon "Ah want a ride up." Another example of the beautiful creole is that of a Kittitian wife saying that her husband is unfaithful thus: "He a nyam out."

There have been other attempts at integration; these have been mainly political in nature. Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain tried to get off the ground the Federation of the Leeward Islands. It failed because the then constitution concentrated more on the political aspects and not the social and economic. For instance, there was one Legislative Council, one High Court, and while the Police, Prison and Postal Service were centrally administered, there was no common treasury.

Then there was the Windward Islands Federation which suffered an abortion when in 1876, Whites in Barbados objected to it and rioted, causing eight persons to be killed. There was too, the West Indian Federation that failed in the 1960s when Jamaica decided to call it quits, and Eric Williams rebounded with "one from ten leaves nought." The Federation failed chiefly because of insularism in that the leaders couldn't agree on the choice of area for the federal capital; they couldn't agree on the number of seats to be allocated to different states and Jamaica objected vehemently to the method of levy in that she had to pay 43 per cent of the Federation's revenue.

In the area of communication, there is shipping via the West Indian Shipping Corporation and three Government-owned airlines. In terms of the media, the CBC founded in 1970 and the CNA in 1974, have bolstered the news of the region. No need for me to mention Carifta formed in 1973 and now Caricom bolstered by the CSME. Other agencies include a Caribbean Meteorological Service (CMS) in 1963, and Carifesta which, from its inception in 1972, has brought together the artists of the region to celebrate our commonalities.

This brings me now to my thesis objective namely, that of all the agents and agencies vying to bring about regional integration, none has been in the forefront more than the calypso, and yet so little emphasis is placed on this fact by leaders in the islands. The reason may well be because so little has been written on our art forms and their contribution to our society. The calypso, as you are undoubtedly aware, is a form of creolized music in the Caribbean, we having taken the roots and rhythm of the music from Africa and added to it our Caribbean flair. We have housed it in a Calypso tent; we have given it a certain length: four verses and corresponding choruses; we have notated it in a special 2/2 beat; we have named the singers in a unique manner; we have dressed the singers sartorially elegant and have used special creolized words to communicate the different messages of humour, smut, commentary, bacchanalia and philosophy. We have creolized the music while retaining the Africanisms within it.

The calypso, as the music of the Carnival, has spread throughout the Caribbean islands; it has served as part of the carnival to bring the islands together in a special way, for it touches a special nerve in our people—that of culture. Carnival has been such a vital element of integration that countries who did not have it in the Caribbean re-established it after a few calypsonians visited their shores. Whereas most persons in the early post –emancipation era associated carnival with Trinidad, today carnival exists in almost every island, making the festival the chief ingredient of regional, cultural integration. So important is carnival that countries in the Caribbean have shifted their carnival dates to facilitate the hordes of people who travel to another state, simply to take in the music and the masquerade. I recall St. Vincent, a few years ago, changing its carnival date to facilitate the Trinis. In case you can't see how important the festival is, a UWI study at the turn of the century noted that Trinidad's revenue increased by over 500 million dollars at carnival time. In case you are still not convinced, please note that after oil and gas, carnival is Trinidad and Tobago's biggest revenue earner.

In case you are still not convinced, please note that it is carnival, more than any other institution that kept BWIA flying and keeps Caribbean Airlines in the air. Without carnival, they would be on the ground. I don't have to tell you the important role that calypso plays in the carnival for without calypso, there is no carnival. Culture, as you are aware, has always been the one foremost pillar uniting all our peoples ever since they arrived from Africa. Our history shows that shipmates from the slavers had a special bond, and families, kinfolk and tribal members stuck together in their struggle with the evils of plantation society. So too, through the culture, with carnival and calypso in particular, they have been brought together uniquely.

What are the characteristics in the calypso that have caused it as an art form to further this ideal of togetherness? First of all, as Africans, music appeals aesthetically to our senses as it did to our forefathers on the African continent. It is the medium of celebration at all feasts and rituals; it is the driving force of the dance; it is the highway of all African, spiritual activity. We Africans dance, sing and chant when we praise God.

Secondly, the calypso has retained the 2/2 rhythm that drives and has driven its adherents and practitioners to ecstasy—to gay abandon. Notice the revelers on carnival day doing things, that to do normally, they would first have to divest themselves of their skins. So a vagrant is pictured dancing with an elitist woman on the front page of the newspaper the day after carnival; the woman at the time believed that her dancing partner was simply masquerading as an unclean vagrant. So an upper class woman or a manageress is seen gyrating in front of the cameras in full view of all her subordinates, something she will not do normally. So the office girl makes love with the messenger, sometimes without knowing him, but driven by the power of the calypso,

she undergoes a certain kind of frenzied reaction that is difficult to describe until you experience it.

Thirdly, the calypso carries with it the way of life of the people, so that all can associate with it; all can bask in its messages. It carried the news and continues to do so, in the absence of CNN. It is the news network, whereby we all know the happenings of the society. It is the radio, the TV and the satellite all wrapped into one. It is the medium by which Antiguans learnt about Trinidadians and Barbadians got to understand Tortolans. Obviously, it will find a special place in the homes of Caribbean people.

Fourthly, it is the hidden transcript of the masses to reply to the public transcript of the dominant minority according to James Scott's writings in "**Domination and the Arts of Resistance.**" Scott explained that Whites, elites and people who are in power, particularly during periods of colonialism, behave in a manner to show off their dominance. Thus they eat sumptuously, live in opulent, salubrious homes, wear cork hats and dress differently to show their dominance. Thus in Haiti especially and throughout the Caribbean generally, for example, mulattoes were not allowed to carry guns or dress as Whites or serve in the Assembly etc. To counter the Whites public transcript, according to Scott, the commoners create a hidden transcript offstage. It is their method of passive resistance. The calypso to a large extent, whereby we laughed or satirized Whites, was our hidden transcript.

The calypso is, according to Scott, the infrapolitics of the dispossessed and the subordinate. What better way to denounce and divide the Whites? What better way to destroy the elite without getting caught? What better way to resist without being punished? "Oh master, you are so beautiful, you jackass," sang the enslaved while the masters danced and sang with them. In 1881, when the masses fought against the police in order to preserve the carnival, the calypsonian used the calypso to rally the forces of the oppressed groups. He sang:

*Bend the angle on them- Is to blow them down - Is to blow them down  
Bend the angle on them- Is to blow them down – Is to blow them down.  
When the bayonet charge – Is the rod of correction (don't forget we say)  
When the bayonet charge – Is the rod of correction - Sans humanite.*

In the 1930s they sang: "Sly Mongoose, dog know yuh name. Mongoose went in the neighbour kitchen/ Pick up piece of she big fat chicken/ Put it inside he waistcoat pocket/ Sly Mongoose." This was done to inform the masses of the sexual activity of an elitist gentleman who was caught in flagrante delictu with his female servant. In the 1940s they sang: "The Governor tall, tall, tall; the governor peeping over the wall." The governor danced not knowing that the singers were saying that he was so tall that he was putting his mouth in people business. Black Stalin sang in the 70s: "Keep the chalice smoking, vampire passing." Plainclothes, another calypsonian in reference to Mr. Chambers the then prime minister sang in the 80s: "Chambers done see, Chambers done see what happening in the country." What better way for the oppressed to satisfy their ego than to laugh at the upper class and sing satirically without their understanding the armour being used against them? Hence the calypso appealed to Caribbean folks as it did to our fore-parents during the time of enslavement.

Fifthly, the calypso was the main element that served as a clarion call to bring the disparate groups of oppressed people together after emancipation. It thus helped them to rally around the culture and gave them hope in the midst of the struggle to survive. In fact, it helped them to survive with dignity. Calypsonian Composer put it better than no one else can, in my humble opinion. Composer sang:



*Oh how my heart goes out to my people – Ah mean the poor and the working class  
Who have to toil and toil for little or no pay – until judgement come to pass.  
They got to make dey mind for pressure – till they going down to the grave  
Cause the wicked and powerful master – treating them hand to mouth like slaves.*

*Ch. They got to keep on working hard- sweating till they smelling bad  
And in the evening when the sun goes down – A fuss they tired – Oh mi Lard.  
But they coming back the following day  
Cause they really need the extra pay  
To buy food to be strong enough – to come and work hard- hard – hard –hard.*

It is for us now to examine the lyrics and role of a few calypsoes and note their contribution to the integration process. First in the promotion of Caribbean unity, the calypsonian urged us to get together by showing us how and why we failed to make federation a reality.

*People want to know why Jamaica run – from the federation  
If you want to know why Jamaica run- from the federation.  
Jamaica have a right to speak she mind – that is my opinion.  
But if you believe in democracy – you’ll agree with me.  
Ch. If they know, they didn’t want federation  
And they know, they don’t want to unite as one and only one,  
Tell the doctor you not in favour  
Don’t behave like a blasted traitor.  
This is no time to say you aint federating no more.*

*Sorry but no federation again – I think it’s a big shame.  
After so much effort and energy – goodbye everybody.  
Right now it’s only a memory – we failed miserably.  
Some may say we shouldn’t have part it,  
But is Jamaica whey start it.*

C.L.R. James gave a lecture in 1963 entitled “We failed Miserably.” In it he pointed out that Sparrow’s calypso on Federation was the best paper on the subject in terms of understanding how and why the federation failed. Black Stalin in the late 70s sang a calypso that is today synonymous with the idea of Caribbean unity. It is called “The Caribbean man.” When it first was aired, it caused a big controversy in Trinidad for many felt that Stalin had left out the Indo-Trinis, since in the calypso he spoke of “the same ship, on the same trip.” In the calypso Stalin offers his listeners a method of attaining unity.

*You try with a federation – the whole thing end in confusion  
Caricom and then carifta – but somehow ah smelling disaster.  
Mr. West Indian politician – Ah mean you went to big institution  
And how come you can’t unite seven million.  
When a West Indian unity – I know is very easy  
If you only rap to yuh people and tell them like me –that  
Ch. Is one race – from the same place  
That made the same trip – on the same ship.  
So we must have one common intention - for a better life in the region  
For we woman and we children.  
That must be the ambition of the Caribbean man – the Caribbean man.*

Another calypso promoting unity is the one by Swallow entitled Caribbean Godfather. The lyrics speak for themselves. Trinidad in the 70s had uncovered lots of oil money; it was the era of Williams who was of the strong opinion that Trinidad needed to help the treasuries of the poorer islands, since all of us have had a common history of enslavement. You see Williams was a historian and his focus was on the theme of enslavement. Listen to Swallow as he sings the godfather.

*When dem islands get in a jam- they come to Trinidad  
Eric help we out breddar man- things bad.  
And Eric with hi heart and soul – like a big brother  
Making sure that he lend them some of the petro dollar.  
Is better to borrow than to thief – with this you must agree  
Cause things can't be good with you when you down financially  
Some o' dem does borrow and borrow and don't give back  
It's a piece of covetousness you know it's a fact.  
Trinidad is the big brother of the Caribbean;  
All o' dem rest o' islands does borrow money like rain.  
From Grand Cayman down to Guyana – making use of the oil dollar  
Trinidad! Our big brother - Is the Caribbean Godfather.*

In the promotion of unity too, as I said earlier, is the festival called Carifesta. The calypsonian explains its meaning:

*Every Trini have family in Grenada.  
And Manning's grandmother and nenen come from Antigua.  
We have more Barbadians in the country  
Than the whole of Barbados could supply we;  
All o' dem married to Grenadians in Laventille.  
And down St. Vincent street by the wharf below,  
Who you think does buy out all dem Vincentian potato?  
That exchange of culture! That is Carifesta.  
Guyana owe we millions of dollar- that is Carifesta.*

We have hundreds of calypsoes that seek to promote Caribbean unity. In addition, when any event bordering on disunity take place in the Caribbean, immediately the calypsonians create tonloads of calypsoes to make the wrong situation right. For example when in the mid 1980s, Milo of St. Thomas came to Trinidad with his calypso band and won the prize for being the best playing band in the carnival, many Trinis objected. They felt that it was not in Trinidad's interest to give that coveted prize to an outsider. Some went so far as to suggest that no aliens should be allowed to participate in the local carnival. The calypsonian showed the protestors why they were wrong thus:

*Well friends Milo and his kings – came Trinidad and they win.  
Playing sweet calypso – they beat our bands you know.  
Bandleaders in Trinidad – vex like bulls a fuss they mad.  
Milo can't come they say and take our prize away.  
Ch. Is time they understand – Milo aint no alien  
All – Caribbean man is distinctly African.  
Our music – yes our culture – Common experiences they share;  
Some may sound different but their roots are in Africa – O Yea!  
The Bongo and your Bamboula – were danced on all plantations here*

*Over in Tortola, St. Thomas and in Antigua. (Swallow or milo)  
Why be so simple/ History proves we are one people.*

Over the years in the Caribbean, show promoters have come to realize that the calypso brings out young and the not-so-young to arenas to be entertained and at the same time, educated. Accordingly, because of these shows, many calypsoes have become popular in the region. Moreover, recordings have increased the popularity of the selections, as the technology aided by conscious DJ's, has brought them into our living rooms to the extent that they have become synonymous with the Caribbean people. When calypso shows are held in any part of the Caribbean, these songs are automatically part of the evening's fare. Let me sing you a few. The first is one particularly loved by Barbadians. It shows some of the characteristics of Bajans or at least how Trinians view them. It exploits the dictum that Bajans are very cunning people. Here in the calypso, a Bajan and a Trinidadian decided to cook together, a scene, really, of integration. Kitch sings:

*A Bajan and a Trinidadian dying with starvation  
When the Bajan say: Look Trini, leh we make a cook.  
I put the rice and you put the meat,  
And then we gwine both have something to eat.  
But when the pot was ready to done,  
The Bajan decide to try a fast one.  
Ch. Baje say: Look Trini, Ah don't like to fight,  
But when come to the occasion, marn, Ah die for mi rights.  
You put in a ten cents meatbone, You think that is nice  
Ah go gie you a word of advice, (Before Ah squeeze you like Christ)  
Take yuh meat out mi rice.*

Here was a calypso that made the Bajan accent very popular, as Kitch sang it with the Bajan accent being accentuated.. The calypso was indeed very popular in Barbados too, for it made the Barbadians capable of outsmarting the smart Trickydadians, as some Barbadians called them. Well the joke continued as the Bajan came to Trinidad and decided that he will cook for himself. So he went behind the latrine and found some crabs and made crab and callaloo, one of Trinidadian's favourite meals. The joke is however, that the Bajan mistook the crapaud frog for the crab and cooked the meal. After feasting on the crapaud, the Bajan belched and said:

*Good lord, crab and callaloo  
Is better than flying fish and coo coo.  
When ah go home, Ah go tell Gertrude  
She must come Trinidad and enjoy good food.*

Another selection that all Caribbean people agree is one of the classics in calypso is that of education by Sparrow. Sparrow himself ranks it as one of his best, if not his best composition.

*Education! Education! That is the foundation.  
Our rising population needs sound education.  
To be recognized anywhere you go,  
Have your certificate to show.  
To enjoy any kind o' happiness,  
Knowledge is the key to success.*

*Ch. Children go to school and learn well,  
Otherwise later on in life you go catch real hell.*

*Without an education in yuh head,  
Your whole life will be pure misery – you better off dead.  
For there is simply no room in this whole wide world  
For an uneducated little boy or girl.  
Don't allow idle companions to lead you astray;  
To earn tomorrow, you gotta learn today.*

Another calypso which for many is the Caribbean anthem is that called “Sea Water and Sand.” It is the favourite of Antiguans and Dominicans including the prime ministers of these two islands. It was the favourite of Dame Eugenia Charles, the Iron Lady.

*Well every Caribbean Leader – making style on one another;  
Every one trying to protect their dollar.  
Especially since Guyana – aint have no foreign exchange sah  
And big Jamaica devalue she dollar.  
Well countries who are more wealthy- bawling out kicky-kicky  
And making style on Guyanese and Jamaican money.  
They can't see in the Caribbean – unless there is cooperation,  
All of them on the same road to destruction.*

*Ch. Is time dem Barbadians understand,  
You can't sit back and laugh at Jamaicans.  
Cause without dem tourist boat from Clinton and Reagan  
Sweet Barbados heading for starvation.  
The day you aint get bail from Washington  
Well, crapaud smoke yuh pipe down in Bridgetown.  
Is time that you and Eugenia Charles understand,  
That all you have is just sea water and sand.*

One of the cultural traits that has forged regional integration in the Caribbean is the game of cricket. Calypsonian Bally puts it very nicely: “In the Caribbean the thing that unites us all, is the cricket ball.” Cricket in the Caribbean is not just a game; it is life expressed in a game’ It is culture. It is an arena of cultural contestation, of resistance, a stage of social significance. It manifests our lives beyond the boundary, as C.L.R. James so aptly put it. It is a capsule of our history. James himself noted that writing a history of Donald Bradman is like writing a history of Australia. So too, writing a history of Brian Lara or Viv Richards is like writing a history of the Caribbean. The importance of cricket as an agent of integration is underscored by the many calypsoes written by singers on the subject. Under the umbrella of cricket, there are songs detailing our history, songs detailing the feats of batsmen, songs detailing our creole language, songs detailing the failures of our team, songs detailing the deeds of our leaders. Using cricket as a metaphor, there are songs of commentary, of philosophy, of smut and of everyday life. Gabby for example was making love to a girl and used cricket to describe his unique lovemaking. The girl motivated him throughout thus:

*Hit it – what you waiting for?  
Hit it – you used to brag before.  
Hit it – if you could handle me  
Hit it- hit it and leh me see.  
Hit it – hit it in the cover  
Hit it – hit in the corner.  
Hit it – hit it in mid wicket*

*Hit it, hit it, hit it.*

In every English-Speaking island of the Caribbean, one sees cricket being played, so that calypsoes on cricket naturally further the ideal of integration. Such calypsoes remind us of the commonalities inherent in Caribbean life. A West Indian cricketing hero is neither Antiguan nor Barbadian; he is West Indian and the West Indian cricket team has inevitably brought the Caribbean together. Calypsoes then that speak of the feats of the West Indian cricket team naturally underscore the topic of unity. Here is Sparrow singing praises to a hero of the game, Sir Garfield Sobers.

*Who's the greatest cricketer on earth or Mars?  
Any one can tell you is the great Sir Garfield Sobers.  
This handsome Barbadian lad really knows his worth  
Batting or bowling, he's the cricket king- three cheers for captain Sobers.  
Win or loss the spectators are always pleased  
With the greatest team on earth, who else but the West Indies.  
Men like Butcher, Joe Solomon, Kanhai and Davis,  
Nurse and Rodriguez, Conrad Hunte and White,  
Gibbs and the wicket keeper Hendricks.  
Ch. Australia you loss! The West Indies is boss!  
The trophy belongs to us. Ah say yuh loss and you know you loss.  
Australia stick yuh grind! Australia don't mind you loss,  
Better luck next time.*

Another important song on cricket is one that highlights the 1950/1 series in England when the West Indies team defeated England at Lords of all places. To defeat England at Lords was to beat a mighty nation at its own game; it was tantamount to defeating them in the mightiest of mighty wars. That calypso brought out all the West Indians in England to celebrate as they never celebrated before. In fact, I am told, that it was that event that started the carnival in London. Again, here is proof of the strength of the calypso to rally the masses and to unite them as one people, they seeing themselves for the first time, not as Trinidadians or Antiguans, but as West Indians in the Diaspora.

*We want Ramadhin on the ball  
We want Ramadhin on the ball  
We want Ramadhin on the ball  
Put him on the ball and another wicket will fall.*

Today, even as the West Indies team has suffered defeat in this world cup 2007, there is one calypso that is sung at every venue in the Caribbean. It is "Rally" by David Rudder. It calls out all the troops; it motivates the players; it reminds everyone of who they are; it informs all the people gathered that they are in a battle and that they must support the West Indies, whatever their nationality or ethnicity may be. It is better known on the cricket grounds that the island's national anthem. In fact, it is to me the anthem of the West Indies.

*For ten long years we ruled the cricket world,  
Now the rule seems coming to an end.  
But down here just a chink in the armour  
Is enough to lose a friend.  
Some of the old generals have retired and gone  
And the runs don't come as they did before.*

*But when the Toussaints go, the Dessalines come;  
We have lost the battle but we will win the war.  
Ch. So Rally, rally round the West Indies - Now and forever.  
Rally, rally round the West Indies – Never say never.  
Pretty soon the runs again are going to flow like water  
Bringing so much joy to teach and every son and daughter.  
Say we going to rise again like a raging fire,  
As the sun shines you know we gonna take it higher.  
So Rally, rally round the West Indies – Now and forever.*

A final area that has caused the calypso to be the music that has led us in the Caribbean to battle the opposing forces is that of history. The calypso, as you are undoubtedly aware, records our history. By doing so, it has served to remind us of our common background, thereby providing a tool for unity in the region. History is therefore seen in the popular “Slave” by Sparrow.

*I'm a slave from a land so far.  
I was caught and I was brought here from Africa.  
Well it was licks like fire from the white slave master,  
Every day Ah down on mi knees;  
And it took weeks and weeks to cross the seas  
To reach to the West Indies.  
Ch. The they made me work, yes ah work  
Good Lord, No Pay!  
And then Ah toil, Ah toil, Ah toil and toil so hard each day.  
I'm dying! I'm crying!  
Oh Lord! Ah want to be free!*

*In my heart, there was much to say  
And Ah hope that the boss would listen to me some day.  
Though he knew my request was small,  
Was the sting of the whip to answer me when I call.  
We had to chant and sing to express our feeling  
To that wicked and cruel man.  
T'was the only medicine to make him listen  
And is so, calypso began.*

Our history is also caught in this calypso on our cultural heritage. The calypso reminds us of the era when we were taught to despise the colour of our skins and the peculiarities of our culture. It goes thus:

*To you dear folks, I'm appealing.  
It's time we do some soul searching.  
Foreign culture we are pushing  
And our own deteriorating.  
It looks as though we are ashamed  
Of our roots or from where we came;  
Foreign culture ranks way above  
And our own we are not proud of.  
Ch. For in Hilton Hotel and Queen's Park  
They don't serve sea moss and mauby bark.*

*New York have so much hamburger  
Yet they serve tourists the same thing here.  
Making our dishes look inferior  
No bull jholl, dhall or Kuchela.  
Hilton, I accuse you of painting a false image – serve local porridge!  
For you degrading our cultural heritage.*

Our cultural heritage was also betrayed and degraded by black men who, as the slave drivers during enslavement, played the part of the whites in a manner that was whiter than white. It was seen on the cricket field when black umpires pampered to Whites by giving wrong decisions against Blacks so as to gain the favours of Whites. It was seen in the office when Blacks carried false news on Blacks to be in the good graces of Whites. It was seen in the behaviour of black men who kept pushing White values ahead of black ones. Duke captured their behaviour well in this calypso:

*Black skin, White man! Which side is your heart?  
Black skin, White man! You got to answer that.  
Although you're black like me,  
I feel your mentality  
Is that of another race  
You don't seem to know your place.  
You sit down dey on the shelf  
You don't seem to know your self,  
Afraid to identify  
Being afraid is your alibi.  
Ch. There's none so blind – as those who fail to see  
We must align – and face reality  
At this stage – if we are to regain our heritage.  
Furthermore more I say – in all honesty  
That today – there's no neutrality  
By your stand – you retarding progress of the African.*

All such calypsoes have touched a nerve in us and have served to unite us in the Caribbean. All such calypsoes have caused the authorities years ago, following an accepted proposal by Caricom, to allow entertainers to pass freely through Caribbean ports. Because of the calypso, Caricom gave entertainers the first lien on free passes. Because of these calypsoes, the Diaspora has been brought closer together, causing Sparrow to say in song: “It aint have no who is who; New York equalizes you.” Because of these calypsoes, our calypso bards have become more known to the public in the Caribbean than our leaders. These calypsoes and the messages they contain reach the public faster than those ushered by political leaders and priests. These calypsoes give the calypsonian power in the society, to the extent that since so many sing the songs and dance to them at carnival, the singers are in a position to impact on values in the society. See power for example in St. Thomas when on instructions, the masqueraders jumped into the sea. See power in Antigua when Swallow stopped a band from entering the island. See power in Trinidad when Kitchener told the authorities that he is not paying any tax to bring in his car.

Finally, this calypso crystallizes in my humble view, the reason why we must seek unity in the Caribbean. This calypso tells us why the bards are in the forefront of the struggle simply because it exposes how they think, and how people of the region should think.

*Come here Keith Mitchell from Antigua  
Come here Compton from St. Lucia.  
Sit down at my feet Baldwin Spencer  
And mi pardner in Dominica.  
Allyuh playing with our future  
Cause like stick break in allyuh ear.  
You, Manning and Douglas aint going no way  
Unless allyuh learn from today.*

*Ch. That it's one River – Several streams!  
One roof cover – Many beams;  
One skirt with pleats and hems – One tree with several stems.  
It's one family – Many cousins!  
One tapestry – Several buttons;  
One mother – Several children!  
One Caribbean- One Caribbean.*

*Look here Mr. Gonsalves from St. Vincent!  
You is a man who could reason.  
Please tell these leaders they stupidly  
To have more than one currency.  
Jamaica own aint worth a farthing;  
Guyana own can't buy nothing.  
Tell Bajans and the Caymans stop laughing because  
When yuh neighbour house on fire, wet yours.*