

## **The Maximum Security Prison/Brown Cotton Outreach Film and Theatre Programme for Long Term Inmates**

**Duration:** 12 months

### **Overview:**

During the 70s and 80s Ellen O'Malley Camps sought to demonstrate ways in which Trinidad's J'ouvert carnival traditions could be made relevant to present experience and useful in implementing positive social change in Trinidad and Tobago. With that intention she showcased these traditions through her experimental Trinidad Tent Theatre Company. Eventually, by the late 80s/90s she added Restorative Justice/Mediation and Humanistic/Transpersonal Psychotherapy to the Carnival traditions, Theatre and Ritual techniques already in use. She called the expanded process Carnival Theatre.

This process led to the nine (9) month "Human Enrichment/Personal and Group Transformation for Maximum Security Prisons (MSP) Officers and Inmates" programme, delivered consecutively, in both the Women and Men's Maximum Security Prisons, Golden Grove.

Camps has been involved with the prison since 2004. She believes that disempowerment precipitates and enables further disempowerment and that the official methods of correction mostly serve to compound the dynamic.

As a consequence she developed the Maximum Security Prison Brown Cotton Outreach Film/Theatre Programme (hereafter designated MSP BCO Film/Theatre Programme).

### **Objectives**

- To give voice to participants' unique experiences.
- To afford the more institutionalized long term and lifer inmates the opportunity to re-visit and re-evaluate their stories and experiences as possible springboards to empowerment.
- To allow the creative use of pain, crisis and failure
- To use portrayals of traditional J'ouvert characters moves and speeches in order to both acknowledge and mock the social order and the status quo of the day
- To explore and evaluate, through performance, notions of justice, identity, empowerment and transformation.
- To create a Theatre Of Carnival ensemble grounded in local ritual, mythology and folklore backed by the insights of Theatre, Psychology and Restorative Justice.
- To further develop the traditional speeches of our J'ouvert Carnival characters so as to become relevant to present day experience and concerns.
- To develop Ole' Mas satirical type scripts as "Cautionary Tales".
- To intertwine traditional "old time" calypsos with appropriate inmate calypsos.



- To develop specific practical skills i.e. Camera (stills and video), positioning, lighting and sound, staging, constructing story boards, movement and performance under the direction of theatre and film/video professionals.

### **Specific Outcomes**

- The programme will develop a core of inmates and prison officers able to promote a better and healthier self-understanding among the prison population.
- Participants able to recognize, develop and teach:
  - Life Skills such as the recognition and development of emotional intelligence, physical wellness (Medical/Hygiene/STDs, Nutrition & Exercise),
  - Critical thinking
  - Better inter-personal communication through right relationship and best communication practices
  - Leadership and team building skills.
- Programme participants will be better able to:
  - Create a 'transformative space' for the collective exploration of individual narratives
  - Develop a permanent, prison theatre ensemble dedicated to the possibility for and the restoration of integrity, empathy and goodwill
  - Promote an empowered self-understanding among the prison population
  - Produce and perform interactive educational pieces (Cautionary Tales) within the prison itself
  - Produce videos for interactive seminars, lectures and TV outside of the prison
  - Develop a Film/Theatre unit able to make good quality videos of performances interwoven with reflections, insights and testimonies from participants that would demonstrate how the Carnival Theatre and Restorative Justice process troubles labelling, stigmatizing and gender stereotyping and affects agency, transformation and individuation
  - Make Trinidad theatre history with the creation of a major "prison inmate" musical/play production for public performance.

**Beneficiary:** Brown Cotton Outreach (BCO)