

Were you there?



Kingston Carnival 2007

At last, the day has come. Everyone is still trying to finish off their costumes and outfits, like the woman I can see trying to glue on the feathers, lying about on the floor. The atmosphere is electric. I can see people shaking from nerves but they are over the moon because of the day ahead. As I stand with my group, I know the moment had finally come, we are about to reap our rewards, we are about to stand tall and march in front of thousands of people. If you haven't realised yet, I'm talking about the day we took part in the Kingston Carnival.

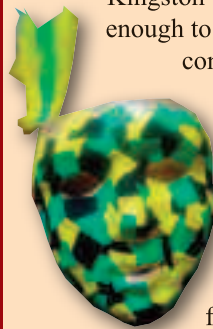
On Sunday 2nd September, Kingston celebrated this annual event organised by Kingston Racial Equality Council (K.R.E.C). The day was aimed at promoting multiculturalism through a variety of performances and cultural food. This year's carnival theme was "Freedom and Liberty" which to me is all about being able to do what you want without anyone judging you. Freedom is about freedom of speech, freedom of information, freedom of thought and freedom of expression. This day was a representation of all the diverse cultural groups that live in Kingston, it was a day of celebration and education.

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The event started with a vibrant carnival procession beginning at Clarence Street, proceeding down to Kingston Market through the town centre and finally leading to the Guildhall where the Mayer of Kingston, Cllr Shiraz Miazr, officially opened the event. As I marched in the procession blowing my whistle and dancing to the variety of carnival rhythms I saw Kingston like I had never seen it before. From a distance I could see a human size shake away, women wearing big beautiful pink flamingo dresses and lights flashing on me as if I were a star.

The live stage performances were amazing, the Korean Break dancers stole the show, Radio Jackie was blasting tunes from all over the world and young people from around the borough joined in the celebrations.

I was taking part in the carnival as part of R.C.A.S. (Raising Cultural Awareness Society), which is a group of young people who try to raise cultural awareness in the community and youth clubs of the borough. If you are a regular reader, you are more likely to remember us from the Black History Month event at Barnfield last October. During the summer, R.C.A.S. held library projects at Surbiton Library Hall where we made different flags, masks and banners for the Kingston Carnival procession. We were lucky enough to take part in the carnival, thanks to the contribution of the Youth Opportunity Fund (Y.O.F.).



Y.O.F. divides a whopping £31 million between all the local authorities to be used for things you would like to do and places you would like to go in your area. Kingston Youth Council are responsible for distributing Kingston's share of the money. This means that young people like you make the decisions on what groups get funding for their projects. In this case the Kingston Youth Service and R.C.A.S. was granted £4000 to take part in the procession and have a stall at the Guildhall. If you would like to join the Youth Opportunity Fund panel and decide who gets the money contact Graham Mann-Smith on 07786702164.

Otherwise, even if you don't want to be part of the panel, you can still apply for funding, just visit:

www.younglivin.org.uk

Also, if R.C.A.S sounds like your thing, all you have to do is turn up to the sessions on Thursday evenings at School Lane Youth Centre from 4:30pm – 7:00pm, or e-mail us at Melissa.Bob-Amara@rbk.kingston.gov.uk

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