

15th annual African and Caribbean fest returns to Washington Park

by GEORGIA GEIS
Staff Writer

The 15th annual African/Caribbean International Festival of Life returns to Washington Park, 5100 S. Cottage Grove Ave., July 4 to 8. Founder Ephraim Martin expects more than 150,000 people will visit the five-day festival.

Festival attendees will be able to sample food like callaloo, Jamaican rice and beans, and jerk chicken and music from around the world. Although reggae takes center stage with internationally known artists such as Buju Banton and Inner Circle, there will also be artists performing calypso, gospel, salsa, blues, hip-hop, R&B, dance and spoken word. Ethnic jewelry, clothing and artwork will be sold from more than 300 vendors including several from the neighborhood. Children can

play at the playground in the center of the festival grounds as well as on the inflatable jumping jack provided.

Martin, who has lived in Chicago for 26 years, used to cover the entertainment beat for local newspapers and found himself caught up in the music culture.

In 1982, he started the Chicago Music Awards and a few years later he founded the International Reggae Music Awards now held at the Apollo Theater in New York City.

Martin started the festival in 1993 as a way to bring people together especially those of African descent. He said he saw a division between recent African and Caribbean immigrants and black Americans. That first fest was a one-day event with 150 vendors at a Chicago racetrack and drew a few thousand people.

"Knowing that reggae music speaks for peace and equal rights and justice for all, we

thought we could use the music as a way of getting people together," said Martin.

The fête established its home at Washington Park the fourth year. After being at the race track and downtown near Navy Pier Martin wanted to bring the celebration into the community.

Now looking back on the last 15 years Martin said that the world culture carnival has made an impact. "People are now living together as one in love and unity," Martin said. "No longer are the African Americans isolating themselves from the Caribbean people or the Africans from Africa."

Parking has been an issue around the Washington Park area in the past, so the festival organizers urge people to use the free parking lots at 58th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue, 55th Street and Cottage Grove Avenue and 55th Street and Ellis Avenue.

Tickets available through Ticketmaster and at



Actor-turned-singer Leon

the gate are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children under 12 and seniors. Call 312-427-0266 or visit festivaloflife.com for more information.

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Sponsor out because controversial musician headlines fest

By GEORGIA GEIS
Staff Writer

Several gay advocacy groups are upset that Jamaican reggae star Buju Banton is headlining the 15th annual African/Caribbean

Festival of Life kicking off July 4 in Washington Park. NBC's local station, WMAQ-TV, has pulled sponsorship for the festival in response to these concerns.

Organizations including Sankofa Way Spiritual Services, Coalition for Justice and

Respect and Black LGBT & Allies for Equality are considering staging a protest with picket signs and gay rights literature at the fest.

"We have called upon the organizer to pull Banton from the festival," said Marc Loveless of the Coalition for Justice and Respect.

Banton, who in 1992 broke fellow Jamaican late Bob Marley's record for the greatest number of number one singles in a year, is thought to be anti-gay because of the lyrics of his song "Boom Bye Bye."

Tracii McGregor, president of Gargamel Music, issued an official written statement that explained that the anti-gay tune was written when Banton was 15 years old and was in response to a man/boy rape case in Jamaica. "Let me make it clear that I do not encourage or condone violence towards any human being, and that includes our gay brothers and sisters," said Banton in the statement.

The Rev. Deborah Lake of Sankofa Way Spiritual Services is concerned that Banton

has not disowned the song, which has been chanted during the beating of gays in Jamaica.

In 2004 Lake founded the non-profit, non-partisan advocacy group based in Kenwood. She started the interfaith group to take care of the spiritual needs of blacks living with HIV and AIDS. "We realized we needed to address social and political issues as well and it has just branched out and grown," said Lake about the organization that now has more than 200 members.

Lake also points out that during an interview with Billboard Magazine last year Banton responded to a question about the gay rights groups protesting his show with "[expletive] them."

McGregor explained that Banton was friends with the reporter and just conversationally responded to the question.

McGregor is upset that the positive things Banton does like the launching Operaton Willy, a Jamaican organization to help HIV positive children, never gets press coverage.

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THE NICHOLS PARK ADVISORY COUNCIL & CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT PRESENT

An Old Fashioned Fourth of July!

🌟 **All Community Parade: 54th & Old Lake Park (HP Bank Lot)**

10:00am Bike Decorating, 10:30am Assembly, 11am Parade Step Off
Fire Engine! Pipers! Marching Bands! Floats! Antique Cars! Costumes! Horses!

🌟 **Festival in the Park: Nichols Park on 53rd Street at Kenwood**

Community Stage: Steve Thomas & the Hyde Park Hot Five
L.V. Banks & the Swinging Blues Band

Children's Stage: Gendu the Magician & Marsha's Music Together

Children's Activities: Jumping Jack! Basketball Bounce! Balloon Art!
Potato Sack Races! Art Center Crafts! Mummy Wrap! Face Painting! Fish Pond!
Clown Bean Bag Toss! Seed Spitting! Tang Soo Do! Balloons! Prizes!

🌟 **Join us!** Volunteers needed on July 4th to help decorate the park and the parade route, to supervise children in the parade and at the park, to blow up balloons and face paint, and to assist with the clean-up.

Call (773) 324-6039 or (773) 955-3622 to volunteer!

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Theresa Booth Yancey, 92

Theresa Booth Yancey, 92, died June 10 after a short illness. She was the only child of Mary and Marvin Booth. She was born in Bassfield, Miss. and she moved to Chicago at the age of seven from Hattiesburg, Miss. She graduated from Willard Grammar School, Hyde Park High School, Lewis Institute (now IIT) and the University of Chicago Graduate School of Social Work, where she was affiliated until her death.

Theresa's first professional job was at the Children's Bureau of Dayton, Ohio where she met and married Luther Yancey. He preceded her in death.

She later worked for the Cook County Department of Public Aid for eight years before going to the Juvenile Court of Cook County as a Probation Office. She quickly moved up four steps to become a Deputy Chief Probation Officer from where she retired June 1, 1985 with honors. While there, she developed the first Juvenile Court Program modeled after Colorado's plan, using volunteers to work with Court Wards. On a Sears Foundation Grant she and Judge William Sylvester White participated in seminars in four states on Volunteer Programs in Courts.

Yancey was active with the Chicago Youth Centers and organized two groups at the Elliott Donnelley Center. She was honored with a Diamond of Donnelly Award for her service. She co-organized the Volunteer Service Guild and the Junior Service League at the old Provident Hospital and held offices for six years. She was a District

Director for the AARP for four years and held office with the "Urban Aides," a group at the Chicago Urban League. She became a life member of the NAACP in September 1985 and a Diamond Life Member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority in 2001. She was a member of the National Council of Negro Women, the DuSable Museum, Operation Push, Jazz Unites, the Jazz Institute, the Institute of Foreign Relations, and was a 10-year member of the Board of the University Park Condominiums where she served six years as the Chairperson of the Personnel Committee.

She was a Christian member of Ebenezer Baptist Church as a child and later, a 55-year member of St. Edmund Episcopal Church, an active member of it's St. Veronica's Guild and Chairperson of the Courtesy Committee for six or more years.

She traveled extensively to Europe, Africa and Asia. Her home reflected her travels. Her social life was tied to her civic life and she was generous with her time and finances.

She leaves to cherish her memory: cousins, Fannie M. Taylor (Marvin), Dr. Rosemary Taylor, Monica L. Taylor, Marvin Taylor Jr., (Anidra), Joyce Sutherland (John) and Lola Bass (Arthur); sisters-in-law, Elizabeth Lightfoot and Kathleen Patton (Emmit); brother-in-law, Virgil Yancey; special friends, Martha "Toddy" Carlisle, Judy Walter and Dr. Jerome Lee. In addition, she leaves a host of cousins, other relatives and friends.

Her funeral was held on June 16 at St. Edmund Episcopal Church.