

Everard Phillips The Political Calypso - A Sociolinguistic Process of Conflict Transformation'
2009 (Personal Power Unlimited. Trinidad and Tobago)

Review By: Ursula Troche (London School of Economics)

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This is a very useful book, especially given the urgency with which we need to engage in finding solutions against violence and inequality in the present times. Violence has increasingly become a problem in urban areas in Britain as well as in Caribbean countries such as Trinidad, Jamaica and Guyana. This book shows that the political calypso is an art form that has created a space where violence and inequality is problematised, and thereby transformed. This function has positive implications for social and even legal processes, argues Phillips, by showing that this art form is, in fact, a form of informal alternative dispute resolution (ADR). With this, it offers a creative healing space for communication, consciousness-raising and healing – and thereby acts as a ‘theatre of emancipation’. The original context and conflict was of course that of enslavement; however, at present spaces of emancipation are still important because the effects of enslavement are still permeating society, in the Caribbean as well as in the UK, in terms of the experience of inequality and violence in various aspects.

The emancipatory and liberatory impact of the political calypso has proved so effective because it carries within it, and consists of, African spiritual approaches and vibrations of harmony, balance and peace-making. Being able to give expression to this aspect of one’s being is liberating in itself, especially in a context where this is often discouraged. And liberation is what we need if violence is to be prevented. How this can be achieved is very well illustrated in this book.

In the UK we have of course no access to a calypso scene as in Trinidad of course, but it could be encouraged here, as well as other art forms, such as performance poetry, where social, personal and spiritual expression takes place, so that conflict transformation is possible. This would benefit the individual, the community as well as society at large, as it aims at a transformation towards peace, justice and harmony.

ursulatroche@yahoo.co.uk