SESAME CARNIVAL 2012

Sesame Flyers portrayal of “Fire and Ice” for Labor day 2012, ironically brought “Praise and Controversy” to our proud legacy of producing the largest most winning band in the Carnival’s 40 year history. The Fire and Ice theme and costumes were launched runway style at the elegant Crystal Manor Ballroom in early June to the Mas community with much awe and praise for elevating our carnival culture and our “Band launch” to the likes of Fashion Week in NYC. Controversy began developing with the changing of WIADCA leadership, the uncertainty of Labor day 2012 funding, and progressed to images of our masqueraders exhibiting some very unbecoming behavior for the world to see.

After 12 Large Band of the Year titles (11 consecutively ), we did not initially intent to compete in this year’s competition, so that we can focus on making this year’s production a viable business model that would not leave us tens of thousands of dollars in the red as it has in most of the last 12 years. We finally admitted to ourselves that our will to win cost us very dearly; a theme covered in the Wall Street Journal’s article about Labor day. So we abandoned 12 years of costume production in Trinidad with much regret and embraced less costly production in China as many of the most successful Trinidad mas bands do like Tribe and Island People. We also reduced the amount of masqueraders we planned on accommodating to reduce the risk of cost of unsold costumes due to the economy. We reduced the amount of vehicles from five to two. This included the elimination of the much loved VIP Doubledecker tour bus, and going with one music truck instead of two. Gone too was,
the free tee shirt concept for everyone who showed up last minute with their family and friends believing that they were entitled to a free tee shirt and that we should pay for them to come hang out/volunteer in the band; instead of them making a donation to the cause.

To all our patrons, supporters and mas lovers everywhere, we the members and staff of Sesame Flyers apologize for the offensive behavior by some masqueraders in Sesame Flyers Band on Labor Day. We cannot defend the behavior of every one of our masqueraders and do recognize that a handful of our masqueraders crossed the line and demonstrated some very offensive behavior which we truly regret. No One likes to be judged, especially during unguarded moments of carnival euphoria. We do however have a responsibility to address public opinion to acknowledge when images of our masqueraders appear to be in contract with our values.

We have to do a better job to prevent this scenario from repeating itself and will develop a code of conduct and decency which we will require our masquerades to abide by in our future presentations. Any masquerader violating our code will be escorted out of the band by our security.

In this day of Instagram, Facebook and the camera phone, we realize that it may be difficult to require photographers to use their discretion when publishing images of individuals they have no acquaintance with We thank you for all of your comments, positive and negative.

Curtis Nelson
Executive Director

Sesame Ryers International Inc.