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# WOMEN'S VOICES: FEMINISM AND CALYPSO IN BARBADOS



*Allison Ramsay*

## **Introduction**

Calypso is an oral tradition of the Anglophone Caribbean rooted in the period of African enslavement. Calypso, regarded as a powerful social instrument that addresses local, regional and international issues, is used to protest against oppression and ridicule those in power through satire and is a form of entertainment. Calypso, which was popularised in the twentieth century, gives calypsonians the power to be the voice of the masses, and this voice has been historically male. However, mainly from the post-independence period, women's voices entered the theatrical space of calypso in the region. This article examines women's voices in calypso through their participation in the Crop Over Festival of Barbados by documenting their involvement in the calypso tents and the country's calypso competition called the Pic-O-De Crop. The discussion starts primarily from the 1980s when Barbados gained its first female calypso monarch. It highlights some outstanding Barbadian female calypsonians and analyses a selection of calypsos on women's issues relating to oral feminism in popular culture.

## **Origins of Crop Over Festival**

Crop Over is regarded as “the festival to celebrate the successful harvesting of the sugar cane crop” (Collymore 29). During the period of African enslavement, “Crop Over was a West Indian festival, practiced on sugar plantations across various islands such as Barbados, Jamaica, St. Vincent and Trinidad” (Beckles 249). Crop Over was influenced by “planter-sponsored ‘Harvest Home’ celebrations” introduced by the English. “End-of-crop celebrations such as yam festivals were part of West African cultural traditions as well” (Ramsay, “The Crop Over Festival” 2). Therefore, a culture of celebrating the harvest of crops was transplanted into the Caribbean.

Harvest Home was quickly creolised by African-Barbadian masquerade traditions, and became known as Crop Over (Burrowes 41). Established as part of Barbados’ entertainment culture by the eighteenth century, “Crop Over began on the last day when canes were cut on sugar plantations, flags were displayed, and allowances of sugar, rum, and salt fish were allocated to the enslaved. There would be dancing and feasting of which planters, overseers, bookkeepers, and the enslaved would partake” (Ramsay, “Crop Over and Carnival in the Archives” 200). Crop Over dances/fetes also were held separately by the enslaved at “negro huts,” squares, or open greens (Beckles 249-250). Masquerade characters such as the Donkey Man, Shaggy Bear, Mother/Mudda Sally and stiltmen, would also perform at crop-over time to tuk music. The burning of a straw-filled effigy called “Mr. Harding” culminated the celebrations (Burrowes 42-45).

By the mid twentieth century, a shift in economic focus from the sugar industry to mass tourism and more options for employment greatly reduced the

celebration of Crop Over in Barbados. By the 1960s, Crop Over celebrations had declined. In the 1970s, there was a wave of nationalism and promotion of national identity as several Caribbean countries gained independence and were navigating their journeys as nation states. At the time, the Black Power movement was on the rise in the United States of America and in the West Indies. Elton Elombe Mottley was one of those individuals who was influenced by this movement and established a pan-African organisation, the Youth Rural and Urban of Barbados (Yoruba) Foundation and Yoruba Yard. Mottley initially attempted to revive Crop Over in 1972, but likely due to its focus on black empowerment, this endeavour was unsuccessful (Ramsay, "The Crop Over Festival" 7). In 1974, a Crop Over Committee of the Barbados Board of Tourism sought to revive Crop Over to boost summer tourist arrivals to Barbados, to increase foreign exchange and to offer the national festival as an indigenous Barbadian institution. However, the majority of events that were offered between 1974 and 1978 under the Board such as a Crop Over Festival Ball, a Jazz Festival, an aeroplane display and a fashion show were not connected to the festival plantation's heritage or the people (Ramsay, "The Crop Over Festival" 7).

## **Calypso**

Calypso/cariso/kaiso is an African based art form that developed in the West Indies. Regarded as popular satirical song in rhymed verse that comments on recognised figures or aspects of social life (Allsopp 131), calypso generally reflects the socio-political conscience of the society and employs various literary techniques to do so (Burke 149). A calypsonian is defined "a competitive professional singer of calypsoes" (Allsopp 131). Calypsonians usually adopt a sobriquet and can be male or female, but traditionally most are men. "They use satire, double entendre and call and response to communicate to audiences.

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Calypso is usually sung in the local Creole or dialect of the country's practitioners. Calypsonians perform in calypso tents and in calypso competitions." (Ramsay, "Calypso, Soca and Mediating Change" 172) They enhance their lyrics "with provocative strutting, eye-catching and sometimes outrageous, self-designed costumes. Their performance is energetic, sensual, visually adventurous and commanding." (Mahabir 409)

In Trinidad, "women first sang the 'Cariso,' an erotic song at Kalenda sessions" (Liverpool 521). In nineteenth century Trinidad, women who were chantuels/chantwells sang fighting songs to intoxicate male stickfighters as they prepared to do battle on Carnival and other days (Trotman 68). These chantwells would "boast the accomplishments of his, or more often her, band in song while pouring vituperation on rival gangs..." (Campbell 12). The belair "could be a song of praise or satire on an individual or a group; it could be a witty or humorous commentary on topical events; or it could record personal adventures, real or imagined, amorous or otherwise" (Hill 72). By the 1890s, female singers declined as a consequence of the suppression of Carnival's jamette element which coincided with the male domination of calypso (Campbell 18-19). As the style and form of Trinidad's calypso was disseminated to other parts of the Eastern Caribbean by the 1950s, the calypso arena also became a male domain in other islands. Therefore, the narratives told by men through calypso as the voice of the people have predominated in the region. Meanwhile, narratives from women were unconstructed or silenced because they were not yet admitted into calypso.

Calypso became entrenched in Barbados; by 1960 a calypso competition was established, and Michael Wilkinson was its first monarch. The popularity of Barbadian calypso can be linked to the re-establishment of the Crop Over Festival (Harewood 213). In 1974, when the Crop Over Festival was re-

introduced, Edrick “The Mighty Dragon” Jordan with the song “Muhammad Ali” secured the crown (Ramsay “The Crop Over Festival” 14). Calypsonians led by “The Mighty Dragon” recognised that they were on the periphery of the Crop Over Festival and fought to get calypso included on the Festival agenda. By the 1980s, the calypso competition had become one of the most important aspects of the Festival (Harewood 213). This was attributed to an increase in the number of calypso tents following the influx of calypsonians because of the popularity of the art form and more air play on local radio stations.

Eventually, the calypso competition developed into what became known as the Pic-O- De Crop which was introduced in 1978 when the Ministry of Education and Culture first assumed responsibility for the Festival. The Pic-O-De Crop is a national calypso competition, beginning with preliminary judging of calypsos offered for the season at various calypso tents.<sup>i</sup> Calypsonians who wish to compete are required to be members of calypso tents. Lyrics must be vetted before performance so that they conform to the defamation and libel laws of Barbados and are suitable for public consumption (Harewood 231-214). After the preliminary stage, eighteen calypsonians are chosen to perform before a panel of judges at the Pic-O-De Crop semi-finals. This is the avenue through which seven finalists performing two songs are selected to meet the reigning monarch at the Pic-O-De Crop Finals, which showcases the talent of calypsonians who have contributed to the cultural development in Barbados and Crop Over in particular while giving recognition to this art form.<sup>ii</sup> In 1983, the National Cultural Foundation (NCF) was founded to oversee the production of the Crop Over Festival, which includes this state competition.

## **Women's Voices in the Calypso Arena**

Barbados' calypso competition, which started in 1960, only produced male monarchs for several decades. Arguably, through calypso, patriarchy was maintained through a "persistence of an ideology of male super-ordination which both men and women maintain consciously and unconsciously" (Mohammed 21). Women's involvement in calypso was limited in part by gender barriers. In its formative years, calypso has had a reputation of being viewed as vulgar, immoral and of the lower classes which contradicted the concept of how black women should be, that is, icons of respectability, virtuous and properly educated. Consequently, black women's presence in the public sphere was not favoured. Although this "English-lady model of femininity was rarely practiced by Afro-Caribbean women," it was strongly accepted as right (Bascomb 81). Therefore, calypso was not regarded as a space for women singers, which likely contributed to Barbadian women's limited involvement and a lack of female monarchs in the twentieth century.

Although there was a perception concerning women's place in society, this attitude shifted by the late twentieth century and twenty-first century as "modernity and cultural progress have been linked to respectable women moving into the public sphere" (Edmonson 2). This was reflected on the calypso scene in Barbados since by the 1980s women's participation in calypso had increased. The timing also coincided with the international feminist movement which came on the heels of independence in the region. During this era one of the most visible manifestations was the United Nations' Year of the Woman in 1975. "In the Caribbean, the movement worked to expand long-held definitions of respectability and propriety" (Bascomb 81). It was within this larger moment of international feminism that Barbadian women began to assert their own notions of femininity within the wider society, including the calypso stage.

## **Women and the Pic-O-De Crop Competition**

During the 1980s, there were few women performing in the calypso tents, and most hardly made it past the preliminary stages to compete at the Pic-O-De Crop. In 1986, Ann Marie “Lady Ann” Straker of the Conquerors Tent became the first woman to reach the finals with the songs “A Woman’s Plea” and “Banana Man”. She again made the finals in 1992 and was the sole female to do so, singing “Culture Gone” and “Change Up the System.”<sup>iii</sup>

## **Queen Rita: Barbados’ First Female Calypso Monarch**

In 1988, Rita “Queen Rita” Forrester created history when she was crowned the first female calypso monarch of Barbados. Queen Rita was born in Guyana. She was a member of many bands in Guyana and was part of the entertainment scene there. A newcomer to the local calypso scene and a first timer in the finals, hailing from the House of Soca, she triumphed over seven male contestants with the songs “Woman Respect Yourself” and “Ah Can’t Party” in only her second year of competition. In the process, she defeated a field of men, including four previous monarchs, “Romeo”, “Black Pawn”, “Bumba” and John King (Ramsay, “Mapping a Musical Journey of Soca” 190).

Through the cultural medium of calypso, Queen Rita’s up tempo tune “Ah Can’t Party” spoke to issues ranging from racism, segregation, child abuse to crime. Her refrain included the following lyrics: “Until racism has been wiped out completely, ah can’t party. Until all classes are treated equally, ah can’t party...when segregation rules the society ah can’t party... Until child abuse is stamped out in this country, ah can’t party ...when people’s morals are dropping daily ah can’t party... When de crime is rising in this country, ah



can't party...when food rising daily, ah can't party...when people suffering in this country ah can't party".<sup>iv</sup>

Her victory against the crowd favourite who was her composer John King by 0.2 of a percentage point, 71.1 to 70.9 did not win favour with the crowd at the National Stadium, Waterford St. Michael. Nevertheless, Queen Rita's victory signaled the beginning of the demasculinising of calypso in Barbados. Queen Rita returned to defend her crown in 1989 and faced a crowd who cheered when she came last.<sup>v</sup> Audience members at calypso competitions can also become participants in the performance through active involvement and discussion of the performance, and sometimes this could be negative (Hughes-Tafen 64). In spite of the audience showing their displeasure at the judges' decision, Queen Rita exuded bravery to defend her crown in front of this vocal crowd who did not accept her, perhaps based on several reasons such as her nationality, gender and their continued discontent with the judges' decision a year later.

### **Increased Participation of Women**

Rita's victory may have inspired more women to get involved in calypso. The feminisation of calypso from the late 1980s was a period of significant social transformation in Barbados as women increasingly articulated gender and other societal issues in the public arena. In the post-1980s era, women's movements increased in the Caribbean which extended to the calypso tents and the country's calypso competition. And so, the progress of women in Barbadian calypso continued. In 1989, two women placed second and fourth in the Pic-O-De Crop Finals, Margaret "Miss B" Bovell-Griffith and Marcia "Marces" Welch, respectively. Miss B, who hailed from the Untouchables Tent, placed second with "No Apartheid Here" and "My Child".<sup>vi</sup> In the wake of Queen Rita's

resounding defeat, Miss B's placement in the top three that year affirmed that women could continue to place in the competition. By the 1990s, there were more women singing in the calypso tents, some of whom made the Pic-O-De Crop semi-finals and/or finals. These include Ann Marie "Lady Ann" Straker, the late Carolyn "Tassa" Forde, Kathy Lewis, Shernelle "Nikki V" Clarke, Roselyn "Black Beauty" Hunte, Lenette Terencia, "TC" Coward, "Miss B" and Lynette "Lady Lynette" Hinds (Ramsay, "Mapping a Musical Journey of Soca" 189-190).

By the end of the twentieth century, a women's movement was visible in the calypso tents and on the Pic-O-De Crop stage. In these forums, the presence and voices of women calypsonians challenged the politics of manhood that was the very essence of calypso. There was a new wave of female calypsonians who emerged on the scene. These included "TC", Chrystal Cummins-Beckles, "Enobong", Donella Weekes, Samantha "Sammi Jane" Williams, Rosita, "Lady Richard", Tara Holdipp, Dionne, Suzette "Jael" Brathwaite, Natasha "Kya" Williams, Samantha "Miss Sammy G" Greaves, Anita "Ms. A.C." Charles who later became "Doyenne", Tiffany "Charisma" Goddard, Aziza Clarke, Anique "Cher" Herbert and De Ann. They represented various calypso tents that rose and fell over the years such as All Stars, De Big Show, Super Gladiators, House of Soca, The Experience Calypso Tent, Bacchanal Time, Straycats Calypso Tent, Tomorrow's Children, Hennessy Hit Parade, Klass Kaiso and the Lion's Den.<sup>vii</sup>

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, women's increased participation in calypso tents led to more women reaching the Pic-O-De Crop semi-finals and finals. In 2000, there were four women out of eighteen semi-finalists: Tara of the Lion's Den, TC of Headliners, Kathy Lewis of Klass Kaiso, and Tassa of House of Soca.<sup>viii</sup> This was the largest number of women to ever make the semi-finals in Barbados' history. At the 2007 semi-finals, this number increased to six

women: TC of Bacchanal Time; Chrystal, Enobong and Sammi Jane of The Experience Calypso Tent; and Tara and Tassa of Cave Shepherd All Stars<sup>ix</sup>.

In 2019, the format of the Pic-O-De-Crop was changed to a single-song requirement with eighteen competitors, instead of eight competitors performing two calypsos. Among the contenders there were seven female finalists: Sammi Jane, Faith, TC, Chrystal Cummins-Beckles, Sammy G, Teri Williams-Niles and Donella.<sup>x</sup> The crown was won by William "Classic" Waithe, while TC and Adrian Clarke tied for second place (Gibbons). The Crop Over Festival was suspended in 2020 and 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, the Festival returned with some modifications. The one song format was retained for the 2022 Pic-O-De Crop Finals. Of the eighteen competitors, again seven were women: Doyenne from the House of Soca; Donella, Sammy G and Teri from the All Stars Calypso tent, all of whom were former Junior Monarchs; Chrystal Cummins-Beckles and TC from De Big Show; and Shondell "Imara" Jahbari from Shining Stars.<sup>xi</sup> Arguably, the one song format allows more women's participation in the Pic-O-De Crop Finals and affords them more of an opportunity to win the title than the traditional process of eight finalists rendering two calypsos.

By participating in the Pic-O-De Crop competition, women have offered themselves as major contenders in the calypso arena vying for the crown. The gendered make up of calypso performance by the very presence of female calypsonians increasingly entering this forum has disrupted to some extent ideologies relating to the role and place of women in Caribbean societies, in the process redefining the notion of who should sing calypso and claim that space. Several women have made the finals over the years, but of them TC and Chrystal Cummins-Beckles have been most consistent in the twenty-first

century. TC and Chrystal started their journey into the calypso tents the Lion's Den and The Experience Calypso Tent in 1994 and 2006, respectively.

### **TC: "The People's Queen"**

TC, who is referred to as "The People's Queen" in Barbados, made the finals on her first try in 1994 and was the only female finalist that year. "Females who were in the game before me did not make it, and here I am this R&B singer in a calypso monarch final. I thought I have nothing to lose. I went to the National Stadium, I performed and I came third behind John King and 'Observer'." (Coward) TC's repertoire over the years has been extensive, inclusive of calypsos that address black empowerment, women's issues, nationalism, politics and even her ability to overcome challenges. For example, her rendition at the 1999 Pic-O-De Crop Finals of "Victory" promoted black pride: "You descend from Kings and Queens, You went through the horror of the seas but God made yuh backbone strong to show dem the right from wrong...So rise up you African children, Victory is certain, Victory is more than certain."<sup>xii</sup>

TC considers the 2003 Pic-O-De Crop Finals one of her best performances. Competing that year "was a source of personal strength for me because I almost lost my life" (Coward). TC's resilience earned her second place. "I came from the hospital bed and performed at the semi-finals and was a reserve. However, someone was disqualified and that is how I got the finals. I came second by a difference of two points." (Coward) From a reserve to a finalist, she told the listening audience through her rendition of "I Can't Take Dat.": "Though my skills are first rate, I know how it feels to be number eight. Me back broad and strong, I'll keep coming with or without a crown...Anything they pelt I can take that." TC expressed her opinion that she can take personal criticism but when she hears about societal issues such as corruption, "I can't take dat at all."<sup>xiii</sup>

Her 2019 rendition of “Iron Lady”, which she regards as another of her best performances, exuded power and conveyed her perseverance to the art form. It also served as an inspiration for other women to stay the course as she acknowledged “iron ladies” such as female Prime Ministers, Mia Amor Mottley, Margaret Thatcher and Portia Simpson-Miller (Husbands). She also included the Game of Thrones Mother of Dragons and the Dora Milaje warriors from the movie *Wakanda* because “I wanted to convey the strength of a woman” (Coward).

The Pic-O-De Crop crown has eluded TC thus far after nearly three decades participating in this competition. Although not holding this title, TC created history in 2009 when she won the first Sweet Soca Competition at the Farley Hill National Park, St. Peter. This competition was founded to create a space for groovy (sweet) soca at a national level and the Party Monarch Competition which was conceptualised in 1995 to cater to uptempo (power) soca. With the same song “Hot Sun & Riddim” rendered in both competitions, she became the first person to win a double crown on the same day. Similar to Queen Rita, TC’s victory was not well received by the audience who blamed the judges and by extension the NCF for what they viewed as a gross error (Ramsay, “Mapping a Musical Journey of Soca” 185).

Unfortunately, similar to Queen Rita, TC also faced adversity when she defended her crown in 2010 at the first ever Soca Royale at Bushy Park, St. Philip. The Soca Royale was to be a battle between the winner of the Party Monarch and Sweet Soca competitions for the final victory as the winner of Soca Royale for the grand prize of a car. TC defended her Sweet Soca crown with the song “Down de Road” but the judges’ decision was not appreciated by the audience. To the announcement of TC’s win “the crowd booed

vociferously". In response, TC and her management declined to perform in the Soca Royale battle, citing security concerns. Anderson "Blood" Armstrong, who won the Party Monarch received the grand prize by default (Ramsay "Mapping a Musical Journey of Soca" 186).

### **A Regional Queen: Chrystal Cummins-Beckles**

The prolific Chrystal Cummins-Beckles has become a staple of the calypso arena in Barbados, not only as a calypsonian but as one of the few female song writers and arrangers in the Caribbean who does both and performs her own music (Cummins). Therefore, the voice and perspective of Chrystal through performance, arrangement and lyrics has echoed through calypso in the Caribbean in multiple ways. Her influence and mentorship are evident with the youth as she has penned several songs for the Junior Monarch competition, which caters to those under the age of eighteen. She has written and arranged for other regional calypsonians as well.

On several occasions, Chrystal has been the sole female finalist in the Pic-O-De Crop. She was the only female finalist in 2012, and though she was not victorious in Barbados, she won the Queen of Queens-Regional Female Calypso Competition in Montserrat for the first time that year. In 2013, Chrystal was one of three women in the Pic-O-De Crop Finals along with TC and Aziza and placed second with her self-penned songs "One Day" and "I Ain't Giving Up". In 2014, Chrystal was the only woman to make the Pic-O-De Crop Finals and placed third. Meanwhile, she defended her regional title in 2014. Chrystal made the finals again with Donella and Enobong and placed fourth in 2015 (Smith). She defended her regional female calypso title for a third time in 2016. "I am the only person in the Caribbean to win three times and earn a hat trick in the Regional Female Calypso Competition"

(Cummins). In her view, the regional female competition is important. "Throughout the Caribbean, I find women are overlooked or underrated in competitions. Women are expected to sing on particular topics or expected to perform a certain way or seen as aggressive when we address certain issues. The regional competition allows us to just be, just bring the commentary and be judged based on your music and not who you are or what you are associated with. I find that brings a freshness that is different from local competitions." (Cummins)

### **Aziza Clarke: Barbados's Second Female Calypso Monarch**

Although there has been some progress of Barbadian women in calypso, the number of women who have made the Pic-O-De Crop Finals has always been lower than the number of men. This may have contributed to the circumstance of there being only two female calypso monarchs in Barbados' history. In spite of the consistency of calypsonians such as TC and Chrystal among others, it took almost two decades for Barbadians to witness another woman win the Pic-O-De Crop Finals. In 2016, Aziza Clarke of the All Stars Calypso Tent became second female monarch and youngest female to achieve this title at the age of twenty-one. In the year of Barbados' 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence Aziza, who rose through the ranks of the Junior Monarch competition, captured the coveted crown with a nation building song, "One People, One Nation." In her rendition, she called on Barbadians to "come together to lift the country higher," and noted "all of we is one people, one nation." Her second song "Bring Back Respect" stressed the importance of persons giving respect where it is due (Ramsay 190). According to "Doyenne", "Aziza's victory showed that women belong in calypso. She broke down a wall and showed young women that we have a place in calypso as well" (Elcock).

## Calypso and Oral Feminism

Caribbean feminism refers to ideologies and movements relating to gender equity and rights for women in the Caribbean. It addresses issues relating to women in the Caribbean inclusive of colonialism and the intersectionality of power relations such as race, ethnicity and class in women's experiences. "Caribbean feminism is therefore born out of Caribbean women's struggles against imperialism, racism and colonialism; in labour movements, political parties, the Black Power movement, women's organisations; and against sexism within educational institutions, progressive movements and everyday life; and against violence against women" (Haynes 30). Barbadian women calypsonians have responded to male dominance by using their voices in celebration of women and womanhood. "Through their songs, calypso women are tapping into and shaping an emergent women's consciousness. This is oral feminism in the making" (Mahabir 410).

Women have used the platform of calypso as a way of adding their voices to women's issues such as sexual harassment, motherhood, domestic violence and women's rights. "Women calypsonians talk to women through calypso, addressing them as individuals who are entitled to freedom of choice and basic human rights, exhorting them to see themselves as individuals with power over their destinies, and cajoling - if not beseeching - them to take control of their lives." (Mahabir 411-412) Provided here is not an extensive repertoire of Barbadian women's calypsos on women's issues but a brief survey of their contributions to Caribbean feminism and oral feminism. In the 1980s "Cherie", who sang with the Battleground Tent, had a hit with her song "Abortion", which advocated for a woman's right to choose. Within that decade, Patricia Maureen Sealy, also known as "Soca Pat" of the Untouchables tent, through her



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song "Marriage Blues" advised women not to settle for anything less than what is fair in married life. <sup>xiv</sup>

"When women sing about women's issues such as domestic abuse, we can be the voice for some persons who are going through it. You never know who is listening and who you can touch through singing on such topics" (Boxill). TC at the Pic-O-De Crop Finals in 1994, 1995 and 1999 communicated to the audience about women's issues. At her first finals in 1994 she came out of the gate promoting the attributes of women in "Put a Woman in Front" and highlighted women's ability to lead the country. Her 1995 song "Rise Up" includes encouraging lyrics such as "get up, young lady, get up, stand up, sweet heart, stand up. Hold up your head and look ahead instead my dear get up. You have been abused, you have been misused...but I know you will rise again..."<sup>xv</sup>

In 1999, TC sang "Broken Dolls", which told the story of a rape victim and likened her to a broken doll whose pieces could never be put back together again. "She's just a broken doll, mutilated and ravaged, a poor broken doll, desecrated and savaged." As she lamented the struggles of this "broken doll," TC called for tougher laws, law enforcement to be better trained in dealing with such cases and cried out for "no more broken dolls" in the society.<sup>xvi</sup>

Chrystal's 2012 rendition, "Fly on the Wall" told the story of issues in society from the perspective of a fly. Her opening lines tackled domestic abuse in the home, the rape of a child by her mother's abuser, and a mother who did nothing to stop it because she depended on this man for financial support.<sup>xvii</sup> According to Chrystal, "Enough is Enough", performed in 2014, was written to speak out against domestic abuse. "I did some research and even attended meetings of an association that assisted survivors. I was able bring to the audience a character that was so believable who told the story of domestic

abuse that many persons thought I was being abused.” Another calypsonian Sammy G’s “Dear Diary” at the 2022 finals highlights the pain of “a victim of abuse and mental torture” written off as a troubled youth. “Running away for days was how she dealt wid de pain, only to be captured and relive it again, over and over again.” Her only solace was writing in her diary.<sup>xviii</sup>

## Conclusion

Barbadian women have made an invaluable contribution to the art form calypso. The entrance of women in the calypso tents and their participation in the Pic-O-De Crop competition shows their determination to be part of the world of calypso. Although women’s presence in the calypso domain has increased, it remains male dominated. Women’s involvement in calypso has required overcoming personal challenges and even audience rejection. For some, the idea of breaking through gender barriers may be seen as a deterrent, however, the fact that stalwarts and youth continue to perform in the calypso arena, lending their voices to the preservation of this oral tradition, speaks volumes. Their presence in itself is a women’s movement. Queen Rita and Aziza have demonstrated that it is possible to compete with calypsonians of both sexes and be a calypso monarch. The possibility of more female Barbadian monarchs is on the horizon.

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## End notes

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- <sup>i</sup> Banks Pic O De Crop Semi Finals July 24 1992 National Stadium, the National Cultural Foundation (NCF).
- <sup>ii</sup> Banks Pic O De Crop Semi Finals July 24 1992 National Stadium, the NCF.
- <sup>iii</sup> *Calypsonians Update: Featuring to Crown a Monarch*, the NCF.
- <sup>iv</sup> Rita - Can't Party, 10 Dec. 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fm6nHLKroeg>,
- <sup>v</sup> "Editorial-Time to give kaiso's queens their due," *Barbados Today* 30 July 2019.
- <sup>vi</sup> *Calypsonians Update: Featuring to Crown a Monarch*, the NCF.
- <sup>vii</sup> Eddies Pic-O De Crop Semi-Finals and Party Monarch Competitions Sunday July 30 1995 Booklet, the NCF; The Cockspur Pic-O-De Crop Semi finals and the Malibu Party Monarch Finals Sunday July 28 1996 Booklet, the NCF; The Cable and wireless Pic- O-De Crop Semi Finals, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 Booklets, the NCF; The Banks Lime Pic-o-De Crop Semi-Finals 2009 Booklet, the NCF;MQI/Banks/Lime Pic o de crop semis 2011 Courtesy Pic-O-De Crop Finals 2019 Booklet, the NCF.
- <sup>viii</sup> Embassy Pic-O-De Crop Finals 2000 Booklet, the NCF.
- <sup>ix</sup> Cable and Wireless Pic-O- De Crop Semi-Finals 2007 Booklet, the NCF.
- <sup>x</sup> "Fierce battle ahead," *Barbados Today*, 26 July 2019.
- <sup>xi</sup> "Five Junior monarchs among those vying for crown," *Barbados Today*, 29 July 2022.
- <sup>xii</sup> Barbados Calypso Music T.C - Victory (Crop Over 1999) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AN1ZzMzslHA> 10 Dec. 2022
- <sup>xiii</sup> Barbados Calypso Music Terencia T C Coward I Can't Take Dat Crop Over 2003, 10 Dec. 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h8Ing3vQIA>.
- <sup>xiv</sup> *Weekend Nation*, 19 July 1985.
- <sup>xv</sup> "Barbados Calypso Music" Terencia "T.C" Coward - Rise Up (Crop Over 1995) 10 Dec. 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FBg42vgHHo>
- <sup>xvi</sup> "Barbados Calypso Music" TC - Broken Dolls (Crop Over 1999) LIVE 10 Dec. 2022 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S\\_B9BqMaVC8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_B9BqMaVC8)
- <sup>xvii</sup> "Barbados Calypso Music" Chrystal Cummins-Beckles - Fly On The Wall" 10 Dec. 2022 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdf18\\_c6fOc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdf18_c6fOc)
- <sup>xviii</sup> "Barbados Calypso Music" Sammy G - Dear Diary (Crop Over 2022) LIVE 10 Dec. 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUjYT04Ou5A>