

# Conscious or Arbitrary: Colour and Symbolism in Carnival Calabar

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#### **Abstract**

Within about twelve years Nigeria's Cross River State has become a hub of tourism activities. The most visible and community involving component of the tourism activities in the state is the annual Christmas Festival, during which Carnival Calabar is staged on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> each December. At this carnival, the aesthetics of colour use is both personal and corporate, incorporating traditional African colour symbolisms as well as individuals' perceptions about *what* is global. On the basis that scholars have suggested that perceptions of colour are cross-culturally similar and that there are pan-human cognitive universals, this paper uses observation and interviews with key social actors in the carnival to explore the inherent symbolism of colours used by bands in Carnival Calabar. In particular, the paper seeks to identify the consciousness or arbitrariness of the symbolisms of colours used by the bands during Carnival Calabar.

Key Words: Cross River State, Carnival Carlabar, Colour, Pan-human, African, Symbolism

#### 1. Introduction

Calabar is the Capital City of Cross River State, Nigeria. With a population of about 1.2 million people, Cross River State is located in the southern coast of Nigeria with Cameroon to its east. The state has diverse geographies including tropical rain forests, mangrove swamps, savannahs, mountains and a rich biodiversity. Endowed with a wide range of solid minerals, including metallic and non metallic gems, there are also a number of waterfalls such as the Agbokim and Kwa falls in Cross River State. The State has eighteen local government areas namely Abi, Akamkpa, Akpabuyo, Bakassi, Bekwara, Biase, Boki, Calabar Muncipal, Calabar South, Etung, Ikom, Obanliku, Obubra, Obudu, Odukpani, Ogoja, Yakurr and Yala. Owing to its location and highly diversified ecology, the government of Cross River State embarked on various infrastructural developments to position the state as the number one destination for both leisure and business. Visitors can enjoy time to any of the waterfalls; wild life sanctuaries such as Drill Ranch (Pandrillus) that protects Drill monkeys (one of Africa's most endangered primates), Cercopan – which is a monkey sanctuary and rehabilitation centre, and Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary. There are also resorts such as the Tinnapa Business Resort, Marina Resort and the Obudu Ranch Resort and much more. Using the Cross River State Tourism Bureau as focal organ in driving public-private partnerships in the last twelve years, the general objective has been to brand Cross River State as a premier destination in Nigeria.

Perhaps the most visible and community involving component of the tourism activities in Cross River State is the annual Christmas Festival, which runs from November 30 to December 31 each year (*Calabar Festival* 2012). During this month-long celebration, the calendar is populated with several arts, cultural, sporting and other events, including drama, film shows, exhibitions, musical concerts that bring visitors from around the world. In fact, the yearly musical concert timetable has brought international musicians like Third World, Shaggy, Akon, Sean Kingston, Rick Ross, Kool and the Gang, Kirk Franklin, Don Meon, among many others. Within the month-long festival programme, the most prominent event is the Carnival Calabar, which has become the colourful highlight of the Nigerian tourism calendar. As far as the carnival parades go, Georgina George, a prominent member of Seagull Band declares that "Carnival Calabar is all about the creative use of colours" (Personal Interview 2011). Also, Big Brown Ibor, another prominent member of the Bayside Band insists



that "colour is the reason for the carnival" (*Personal Interview* 2011). In a keen way, therefore, Carnival Calabar has become a festival of colours in the sense that colour is the key component of the parades. Thus, from year to year, bands and individuals continue to explore the brash symbolism of colours in competitive yet recreational way. One core issue all of this brings to the fore is the question of whether there is arbitrariness in colour choices or there is a conscious use of colours around a superstructure of inherent symbolisms. This paper uses observation and interviews with key social actors in the carnival to explore the inherent symbolism of the range of colours used by bands in Carnival Calabar. In particular, the paper seeks to identify the consciousness or arbitrariness of the symbolism of colours used by the bands during Carnival Calabar.

#### 2. The Symbolism of Colour

In her work among the hunter-gatherer society of Dugum Dani, Heider (1972) demonstrates that particular sets of colour categories may be pan-human cognitive universals that aid memory. Thus, while different people in different cultures may interpret and use colours in different ways, there seem to be universal and pan-human physical, social and psychological symbolisms that may be associated with certain colours.

In this sense, colours may have physical symbolism such as traffic lights where red means stop, green means go and yellow means caution. Within the same physical notion, a colour like green symbolises ecology and sustainability in an environmental context, where companies and individuals are 'going green' by finding ways to cut back on energy use or other things that purportedly damage the environment. As referents to a physical property, bright colours like red, orange and yellow also symbolise heat or temperature.

Colours can also have social symbolisms such as national colours (like Nigeria's green-white-green or the American red, white, and blue) perceived as 'patriotic' when used as flags or in branding. In the same vein, things are said to be 'black or white' when perceived in firm, opposite or extreme positions; while they are said to be 'gray areas' when unclear or not in firm positions.

Equally, colours may also be psychological in symbolism, such as red and green being Christmas colours. As psychological referents, emotions are also symbolised by colours, where red is strong and symbolises power, blue is seen as conservative and brighter colours such as yellow and orange represent emotional warmth. In the same vein blue, green, or dark colours are 'cool'; people are said to be 'blue' when they feel down or depressed; and people are said to 'see red' when they are angry (Incredible Art Department 2012). Be that as it may, we need be careful in applying the categories above because, as Brusatin (1991) warns, it is difficult to organise colour into a rigid system of symbols. While the summary of colour symbolism in Table 1 are generalised, there are inherent cultural mechanisms that ultimately determine meanings in different societies. It is these inherent mechanisms that MacKenzie (1922) termed 'colour clues' which, he suggests, may assist in our understanding of colour symbolism within a particular culture. Thus, psychological processes are often affected by colours in contradicting ways where, for instance, red has been shown to enhance the performance of cognitive tasks over blue or green and other studies demonstrating the opposite (Mehta and Zhu, 2009). However, according to Elliot and Maier (2007), cognitive tasks can be affected by colour under certain conditions:

- 1. Colour must subsume a specific meaning
- 2. Colour's meaning is based on learned associations and biological responses
- 3. That the perceptions of colour alone ignite evaluative processes



- 4. That evaluative process ignited by the perception of colour influences motivated behaviour, where positive and negative associations trigger approach or avoidance motivations respectively
- 5. That colour has an implicit and automatic influence on psychological functioning and motivation behaviour is activated unconsciously.
- 6. That colour's meaning and effect is contextually ascribed as, for example, red is associated with danger/mistake in a classroom (achievement) context whereas it has positive associations in the social context of romance (Elliot & Niesta, 2008).

In consonance with Elliot and Maier's six conditions above, Sloane (2006) notes that responses to colour symbolism are also responses to preconceived and predetermined ideas about colour, rather than responses to colour's inherent nature. Thus, symbols are created and symbolic connotations of colour are ascribed because of man's inability to prevent his intellectual, psychological and literary preconceptions from interfering with the world he directly perceives. Thus colour with its symbolisms and combinations tend to be culturally bound with ideologies and traditions inherent in the immediate environment (Geboy 1996). Therefore, since as Grimes and Doole (1998) suggest, perceptions of colour are cross-culturally similar, what then are those perceptions of colour among Carnival Calabar participants and how do they resonate with, or differ from, pan-human symbolisms of colour?

#### 3. Carnival Calabar

Carnival Calabar is a colourful event tagged 'Africa's biggest street party' and established in 2000 as a street parade, when the then governor of Cross River State, Donald Duke, had a vision of making his state the hub for tourism and hospitality in Nigeria and in Africa. By 2004, it became more organised in costume, revelry and the formation of bands. In 2007, a Cultural Parade and Children's Carnival was added, making it a two-day carnival. Carnival Calabar is directly fashioned out of that existing in Trinidad and Tobago. And, in fact, government sent troupes to Trinidad and Tobago to be trained in carnival crafts like costuming and metal drumming. The carnival is built around five bands namely, Passion For (Passion 4), Seagull, Master Blaster (also called Masta Blasta), Bayside and Freedom. Memberships of these carnival bands run into several thousand individuals from all walks of life that plan, rehears and undertake to parade on carnival days. There is also the Carnival Calabar Queen, a pageantry organised as part of the carnival. In terms of funding, "government gives direct subventions, while bands generate income from sponsorships from companies, private grants and registration of members" (Esekong Andrew, Personal Interview 2012). While the bands are funded through public-private sponsorships and government sets the theme for each year's event, bands are autonomous with their own official colours and the freedom to design and execute the yearly theme as deemed fit. In 2010, for example, the theme was 'Our strength and resilience- the bedrock of our future' (Nigeria 2010) while that for 2011 was 'Endless Possibilities' (Emelike 2011). Part funding and sponsorship comes from companies such as Pepsi, Dangote Group of Companies, Oceanic Bank Plc (now part of Ecobank), Guinness Nigeria Plc, etc (Charles 2011). The street party has also become, for the state and its people, an ideal tool for tourism and ultimately socio-economic development (Calabar Carnival Brochure, 2009). In terms of administrative structures, the bands are led by boards headed by key individuals as indicated in Table 2 bellow. Bayside Band, for example, has a 7-member Advisory Board and an administrative office headed by a Program Manager. Apart from being the only band led by a woman, Seagull Band is also the only band that brings Nollywood video film stars like Pete Edochie, Ramsey Noah, Ini Edo, Rita Dominic, the duo of Aki and Pawpaw etc to the Carnival.



From October of each year, there is a series of dry runs, which are mock rehearsals involving all the participating bands in preparation for the main event on December 27th. The main event has a route that spans a 12km stretch of Calabar metropolitan road (Carnival Calabar 2012). The parade's route begins from the Millennium Park, through the Mary Slessor Roundabout, Ndidem Usang Isor Street, MCC Road and finally ends at the U.J. Esuene Stadium (Uguru 2010). At various points on the carnival route, teams of adjudicators are stationed to assess the various bands' (and their subgroups) performances. These scores are then collated at the end of the parade and winners are selected based on the highest total scores. In order to execute the year's theme, bands mobilise themselves and create colourful costumes, props and other spectacular paraphernalia of performance, including elaborate carnival floats and special costumes for the 'king' and 'queen' (Figure 1) who are central dramatis personae around which each band's thematic rendition is enacted by masses of members drawn from all walks of life. In each band, the King and Queen are placed at the head of the carnival processions. There is a ten million Nigerian Naira (about \$66,000 US) prize competed for by the five bands. The carnival exhibits a rich blend of creativity, costume, dance, music and colour from all the bands. In the whole month-long festivities, there is great enthusiasm and intermingling among participants who cut across age and social strata. During the carnival processions, the high and low mingle, dance and make merry for more than 11 hours (Uguru 2010). In essence, owing to the volume and diversity of individuals' participation, Carnival Calabar can be defined as what Hall (1981), Barber (1997) and Dolby (2006) have termed popular culture. In this popular event individuals and bands revel in costumes, dance, music and props defined by heavy use of dazzling colours. There are economic benefits that accrue to small scale businesses in the months that run-up to the carnival, especially the tailoring, haberdashery, arts and crafts, carpentry, welding, Disk Jockey, etc that are involved in productions for the bands.

### 4. Colour Use and Symbolism in Carnival Calabar

Since each of the Carnival Calabar bands has its own official colour as shown in Table 2, they fund the production of costumes centrally, in order to maintain uniformity both of the fabric used and of colours themselves. Within the same band, there are several subgroups with different performance roles. Costumes are not just centrally made but are centrally distributed to everyone on equal basis, depending on individuals' performance roles in the parade. Also, according to Esekong Andrew, who designs for Passion 4, the central inspiration for the carnival designers is the "desire to have an outstandingly creative, flashy product on the carnival route and the prestige of winning a prize" (*Personal Interview* 2012).

#### 5. Designing a King and Queen Costume: Master Blaster Band (2011)

All bands in Carnival Calabar have specific designers that head technical teams comprised of several artisans. For example, as technical director for Passion 4 band, Esekong Andrew takes "charge of theme interpretation, prescription of colour harmonies, production of float, theme carriers, mini floats, section standards and general decoration" (*Personal Interview* 2012). It is the technical director that serves as the focal person for set design in the year's performance of each band. He (so far there have been only males) takes the creative brief from the band leadership and transforms this into several visual designs on paper to interpret the year's theme. Maquette of the designs are usually made and submitted along with the paper illustrations. These designs are then submitted to the band's leadership for perusal, from which one is selected for execution. The designs include the apparels, mechanical and decorative gears, masks, props, including banners and the elaborate float (a big truck, usually a trailer and bucket) upon which the musicians and other parade needs are mounted. Among the set designer's works, the most important are those to be used by the King and Queen of the band. It is within the costume designs for the King and Queen that the carnival's theme and band's colour symbolisms are most prodigiously expressed



and experienced. And, because of the centrality of the King and Queen in Carnival Calabar, their costumes are specially assessed by the teams of adjudicators. Thus bands place premium importance to their costumes. In order to fully comprehend the scope of symbolism in the designs for the King and Queen, the authors had an interview with Okpoke Okon, head of the technical team of the Master Blaster band. Okpoke is an artist and coordinator of Compositionz Gallery located at No. 5 Eta-Agbor Crescent, Calabar. He performs his design functions from his office. Bellow is an abridged text of the interview held with Okpoke at his office on February 21, 2012.

- Q: What exactly did you design for the band in 2011 and how long have you been in the Carnival Calabar system?
- OO: I designed the entrance gate, section banners, King and Queens's costume, made sketches for costumes and props and also interpreted the story line into pictures. I have been working with the Masta Blasta band for over three years.
- Q: What colours did you use for the design and the reason for using the colours, including their significance and meaning?
- OO: The Masta Blasta colour is the dominant colour for the design which is orange and it symbolizes a bright future. Colours like white, black, maroon etc. can be added to heighten or loosen the brightness of the colour, based on the group display or act. Hence, the colour of the band must be reflected in the design.
- Q: Based on the theme of the year (2011) what is the story behind the king and Queen's costume design?
- OO: The theme of the year was 'Endless Possibilities'. The Masta Blasta played the *Master's Paradise*, using a young child that perceives and sees the future as 'bright' and 'revolutionary'. The child is a vision for Cross River State to be taken to a higher level where most of our dreams as individuals and as a collective would be achieved. This vision includes economic, health, socio-cultural, technological (like steady electricity supply), developments in agriculture etc, all envisioned in the endless possibilities. In the overall design, the costumed Queen symbolised the Comet Queen, exhibiting cosmic feature of colours that sparkle, showing the potentials that are yet to be unravelled in Cross River State. The king remains her Lord and supporter in life and through him, more visions would be established.
- Q: What are the challenges faced while designing the costumes?
- OO: Well, timing is a very serious issue because commissions do not arrive on time. Therefore, time is always too short for the job to be given its best. The psychological effect is stress because the design deserves a lot of thinking, comparisons, good materials, good colour combination and good hands too, in order to meet-up with the colour and visual standards of the band leader. Believe me, it is not easy.
- Q: What do you think about your productions so far?
- OO: Though stressful, I have learnt a lot about the beauty of colours, their significance and meaning both in our culture and in a global sense. More importantly, I am excited participating in the Carnival Calabar.

## 6. Discussions

Much can be gleaned from the interviews with key members of the five bands in Table 3 particularly when juxtaposed with the content of the so-called universal colour symbolism chart in Table 1. While they all agree that colour is the central hinge of the carnival parades, they also outline the symbolism behind their bands' use of key colours. Whereas these symbolisms inherent in the Carnival Calabar parades are motivated by the African experiences of participants, they nonetheless are compatible with global symbolisms that Table 2 illustrates. Figure s 1-8 show the brash and visual language



of colours as used by the bands to create their kings and queens. The colour combinations are convincingly deliberate rather than arbitrary, demonstrating the conscious thought processes behind their use. Even where the bands use 'dull' or 'cold' colours like blue to produce the king and queen,, they take the creative pain of infusing non-official colours like yellow, orange and red to warm things-up (Figure 8). Table 4 provides an analysis of the compatibilities between the African colour symbolisms inherent in Carnival Calabar and global notions of colour. In Table 4, we find that the same concepts are implied in the symbolisms and, in most cases, the African participants of Carnival Calabar employ exactly the same words as the universal colour symbolism chart in Table 1 to identify their symbolic use of colour. As Okpoke Okon says, these colours and inherent symbolisms are employed in visual designs that "heighten or loosen the brightness of the colour, based on the group display... about the beauty of colours, their significance and meaning both in our culture and in a global sense" (Personal Communication 2012). Okon's expression provides us with an interesting notion of modernity among participants of Carnival Calabar. Participants generally believe that they are engaged in a 'modern' rather than 'African' celebration. They know that they are Africans using African cultural materials in a contemporary carnival. However, they also know that a bulk of the materials (fabrics, trimmings etc) is from other cultures. In fact, they see the use of imported materials and the participation of western, Arabian and Eastern tourists in the Carnival Calabar as 'modernism' in which their African life is modernised by a syncretic relationship with the global. This sense of modernity is what Okon above captures when he says 'in our culture' and 'in a global sense'. Like Okon, all other interviewees in the research alluded to this sense of modernity in the Carnival Calabar parades.

#### 7. Conclusion

The use of colour by participants in the Carnival Calabar transcends class, gender and other social categorisations and does not reproduce any sort of divide between the so-called 'haves' and 'have-nots' in the way that Halldór Laxness portrays his characters in Salka Valka (1936). In his influential work, Laxness' portrayal of 'grey' and its varieties symbolise the glom of poverty while brighter colours are juxtaposed to portray the vibrant life of wealthy individuals within the same social economy (Van Deusen 2009). Carnival Calabar bands do not use the colour grey and its derivatives, which are thought to be dull, boring, uninteresting and symbolise poverty (Kouwer 1949, Blanch 1967). Rather, they contract the band's yearly costumes to the same tailors who obtain colourful accessories from the same haberdasheries. In other words, socioeconomic differentiation of members by colour is not a feature of revellers of Carnival Calabar bands. At the parade ground, the stress is on comradeship and a sense of communality whose goal is to compete in the colourful merriment. Furthermore it is clear that, while bands use their official colours, these colours are employed in the parades with a sense of richness that transcends the physical qualities of the colours themselves. The richness of colours used in Carnival Calabar derives from participants' ability to appropriate global notions of colour symbolisms into their local frameworks. And, in that sense the use of colour in the carnival represents a modernity that is enacted as a visual practice. Thus the bands' use of colour in the Carnival Calabar is a practice similar to Turner's concept of 'social drama' which enables us look deeper into "social regularities into the hidden contradictions" within society (Deflem:3). As visual and sociological features of the Carnival Calabar, seemingly regular colour symbolisms in the parade provide us with insights into hidden social truths. In this case, the fundamental social truths are that (1) bands and participants select and use colour consciously rather than arbitrarily, (2) colours so selected have core symbolisms for which they are used by the bands, (3) to the participants, while the colours used reflect African symbolic contexts, they resonate with global symbolisms and (4) the use of colour in the carnival is a means for participants to practice modernity in a visual way. In this sense of modernity, local colour



symbolisms are syncretised with global, pan-human notions. In the end, the use of colour in Carnival Calabar, as well as the symbolisms articulated and practiced by participants is consciously local, global and modern at the same time.

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**Table 1: Colour Symbolism Chart** 

| S/N | Colour    | Symbolism  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|-----------|--|--|--|--|--|
| 1   | Red       | Excitement, energy, passion, love, desire, speed, strength, power, heat,       |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | aggression, danger, fire, blood, war, violence, all things intense and         |  |  |  |  |
|     | D: 1      | passionate.  |  |  |  |  |
| 2   | Pink      | Pink symbolizes love and romance, caring, tenderness, acceptance and calm.     |  |  |  |  |
| 3   | Beige     | Beige ivory symbolize unification. Ivory symbolizes quiet and pleasantness.    |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | Beige symbolizes calm and simplicity.  |  |  |  |  |
| 4   | Yellow    | Joy, happiness, betrayal, optimism, idealism, imagination, hope, sunshine,     |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | summer, gold, philosophy, dishonesty, cowardice, jealousy, covetousness,       |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | deceit, illness, hazard and friendship.  |  |  |  |  |
| 5   | Blue      | Peace, tranquility, cold, calm, stability, harmony, unity, trust, truth,       |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | confidence, conservatism, security, cleanliness, order, loyalty, sky, water,   |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | technology, depression, appetite suppressant.                                  |  |  |  |  |
| 6   | Turquoise | Turquoise symbolizes calm. Teal symbolizes sophistication. Aquamarine          |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | symbolizes water. Lighter turquoise has a feminine appeal.                     |  |  |  |  |
| 7   | Purple    | Royalty, nobility, spirituality, ceremony, mysterious, transformation, wisdom, |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | enlightenment, cruelty, arrogance, mourning.                                   |  |  |  |  |
| 8   | Lavender  | Symbolizes femininity, grace and elegance.                                     |  |  |  |  |
| 9   | Orange    | Energy, balance, enthusiasm, warmth, vibrant, expansive, flamboyant,           |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | demanding of attention.  |  |  |  |  |
| 10  | Green     | Nature, environment, healthy, good luck, renewal, youth, spring, generosity,   |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | fertility, jealousy, inexperience, envy, misfortune, vigor.                    |  |  |  |  |
| 11  | Brown     | Earth, stability, hearth, home, outdoors, reliability, comfort, endurance,     |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | simplicity, and comfort.   |  |  |  |  |
| 12  | Grey      | Security, reliability, intelligence, staid, modesty, dignity, maturity, solid, |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | conservative, practical, old age, sadness, boring. Silver symbolizes calm.     |  |  |  |  |
| 13  | White     | Reverence, purity, birth, simplicity, cleanliness, peace, humility, precision, |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | innocence, youth, winter, snow, good, sterility, marriage (Western cultures),  |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | death (Eastern cultures), cold, clinical.                                      |  |  |  |  |
| 14  | Black     | Power, sexuality, sophistication, formality, elegance, wealth, mystery, fear,  |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | evil, unhappiness, depth, style, evil, sadness, remorse, anger, anonymity,     |  |  |  |  |
|     |           | underground, good technical color, mourning, death (Western cultures).         |  |  |  |  |

Source: Incredible Art Department 2012



**Table 2: The Bands of Carnival Calabar** 

| S/N | Band           | Official Colour | Leader            |  |
|-----|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--|
| 1   | Passion For    | Green           | Chris Agibe       |  |
| 2   | Seagull        | Red             | Florence Ita-Giwa |  |
| 3   | Master Blaster | Orange          | Gershon Bassey    |  |
| 4   | Bayside        | Blue            | Donald Duke       |  |
| 5   | Freedom        | Yellow          | Henry Brisbe      |  |

Table 3: Interview with Key Members of the Five Bands

| S/N | Name/Band                             | Response   |  |  |
|-----|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
|     |                                       | Elizabeth says colour brings beauty to the Carnival. It is the proper use of |  |  |
| 1   | Elizabeth Nta                         | colours in costumes, trucks etc that attracts viewers or tourists to the     |  |  |
|     | (Freedom Band)                        | State. However, she added that yellow, is beautiful and it signifies the     |  |  |
|     | , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , | sun, freedom, fruitfulness etc. (See the costume of the Freedom Band's       |  |  |
|     |                                       | Queen for 2011 in Plate 4)   |  |  |
|     |                                       | Brown believes that colour is the reason for the carnival. He also adds      |  |  |
| 2   | Big Brown Ibor                        | that without colour, the street Festival would be boring to watch. In his    |  |  |
|     | (Bayside Band)                        | view about his band's colour he says that blue is the state's colour and it  |  |  |
|     |                                       | also possesses a calm and cool effect. It could look attractive if different |  |  |
|     |                                       | shades are combined with warmer colours. (See the Queen and King's           |  |  |
|     |                                       | costume of Bayside's 2009 parade in Plate 8)                                 |  |  |
|     |                                       | Georgina excitingly mentions that the street party would be 'whack'          |  |  |
| 3   | Georgina George                       | without different colours exhibited usefully. Besides, if everyone wears     |  |  |
|     | (Seagull Band)                        | white, it would look like a church procession and if everyone wears black,   |  |  |
|     |                                       | it would look like a burial procession. Therefore, Carnival Calabar is all   |  |  |
|     |                                       | about the creative use of colour. Red means love, courage, pride and it      |  |  |
|     |                                       | could mean danger too, she added. (See Plate 5 showing a popular             |  |  |
|     |                                       | Nollywood Star Emeka Eniocha wearing the King's costume for                  |  |  |
|     |                                       | Seagull's 2011 parade)   |  |  |
|     |                                       | Each band expresses the meaning of each group display with colour and        |  |  |
| 4   | Peter Blade                           | colours convey a lot of meaning to the mind. He explained further that       |  |  |
|     | (Master Blaster Band)                 | orange stands for a bright future ahead of us and unlimited opportunities    |  |  |
|     |                                       | for the youth as well as the country. (Plate 6 shows the Queen of Masta      |  |  |
|     |                                       | Blasta in her attractive costume during the 2010 parade)                     |  |  |
|     |                                       | According to Doris, the Passion 4 Band has been the winning band for         |  |  |
| 5   | Doris Aweye                           | five straight years. The one reason for that is because of the use of their  |  |  |
|     | (Passion For Band)                    | colour. Colour, expresses the things we cannot say and it was created to     |  |  |
|     |                                       | convey us. Sometimes colour can be very abusive, interesting,                |  |  |
|     |                                       | challenging, charming etc. Without different varieties of colour, the        |  |  |
|     |                                       | carnival could not have excelled to this point. In her description of her    |  |  |
|     |                                       | band's colour, she says 'green' is the colour of the mind; it stands for     |  |  |
|     |                                       | growth, vegetation, envy etc. Depending on the shades of green used,         |  |  |
|     |                                       | some shades could be very dull and dirty. (Plate 7 shows the costume of      |  |  |
|     |                                       | the Passion 4 Queen at the 2010 carnival)                                    |  |  |



# Table 4: Key Symbolisms of Colours in Carnival Calabar

| S/N | Band              | Key Symbolisms                         | Colours<br>Used | Equivalent in the Colour<br>Symbolism Chart |
|-----|-------------------|--|-----------------|---|
|     | Freedom Band      | Sun, freedom, fruitfulness             | Yellow          | Imagination, hope, sunshine                 |
|     | Bayside Band      | Calm, cool                             | Blue            | Calm, harmony                               |
|     | Seagull Band      | Love, courage, pride, danger           | Red             | Love, strength, danger                      |
|     | Masta Blasta Band | Bright future, unlimited opportunities | Orange          | Vibrant, expansive                          |
|     | Passion 4         | Growth, vegetation, envy               | Green           | Fertility, nature, envy                     |



Figure 1: An example of a king and queen from one of the Carnival Calabar bands at the 2007 edition. Notice the exotic allusion to Egyptian culture in the costuming





Figure 2: Masta Blasta King 2011



Figure 3: Masta Blasta Queen 2011



Figure 4: Freedom Queen's costume 2011



Figure 5: Seagull King 2011







Figure 6: Masta Blasta Queen's Costume 2010

Figure 7: Passion 4 Band Queen's costume 2010



Figure 8: Bayside Queen and king 2009