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Covid-19 Forces Cancellation of Annual Caribbean Carnival Parade in New York During Labor Day Weekend

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NEW YORK, CMC — The New York-based West Indian American Day Carnival Association (WIADCA) has announced the cancellation of the annual carnival parade on Brooklyn’s Eastern Parkway this year amid concerns over the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

“In lieu of carnival parade, we will be holding solidarity march to acknowledge the barriers that be taken down and the distance we must still travel. We do not want the carnival to be a memory,” the WIADCA said in a statement.

“Our plans are to do whatever we can –in the virtual world of COVID-19 communications – to sustain us all until we can again be physically together,” it added.

The cancellation comes after New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio said on Thursday last week that large events requiring a city events permit will be cancelled through September 30, “as the city works to prioritize open spaces for public use”.

The mayor said the city will not issue a permit for any event in a location that interferes with the Open Streets or Open Restaurants program.

He said permits will also be denied for all events larger than one block, stage/video events that require amplification, street fairs and events in parks that may “unreasonably diminish public use.”

De Blasio said the city will refund or defer fees paid in connection with a denied permit.

“As New York has begun its reopening process, accessible open spaces are more important than ever. While it pains me to call off some of the city’s beloved events, our focus now must be the prioritization of city space for public use and the continuation of social distancing.”

The Mayor’s Executive Order will require all permit applicants to outline their plan to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19 at the event site and clean the event space both during and after the event.

WIADCA, however, said the carnival tradition will be uninterrupted, as it instead goes virtual for 2020.

“We inaugurate our 54th year using technology. We refuse to give in. COVID-19 will not stop us. The show must go on,” WIADCA said, adding its on-line offerings will highlight art, music performances, fitness, health and culinary masters.

In addition, it said it will pay special tribute to the youth and seniors, and that a compendium of film footage taken of previous carnivals is being created as well.

“Our programme will highlight activities COVID-19 cannot and will not be allowed to stop. We are addressing and promoting enhanced mental health and wellness specialization, community awareness and camaraderie.

“We know that our young people will protect and transmit our cultures to future generations,” it added. “We will be producing a virtual youth festival.”

The West Indian American Carnival Parade in New York, on Labour Day, the first Monday in September, attracts over three million people from around the world for what is arguably the largest carnival parade in North America.