

YO SOY CARNAVAL
(I AM CARNAVAL)

DIRECTED BY
CESAR ERNESTO GARCIA

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SYNOPSIS

DURING THE END OF FEBRUARY IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, CARNAVAL HAPPENS IN EVERY CITY. IN THIS SHORT DOCUMENTARY, 4 LEGENDARY DESIGNERS OF CARNAVAL IN THE CITY OF SANTIAGO DISCUSS THE DIFFERENT WAYS THEY INTERPRET THIS CELEBRATORY EVENT AND WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THEIR HOUSEHOLD NAMES. THROUGH INTIMATE CONVERSATIONS IN THEIR RESPECTIVE WORKPLACE, WE LEARN ABOUT THE PROCESS OF EACH OF THESE ARTISTS BEHIND THE SCENES.

DENISE LEON IS KNOWN AS ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR CHARACTERS IN CARNAVAL. SHE PORTRAYS THE “ROBA LA GALLINA” WHICH IS A CHARACTER KNOWN AS THE CHICKEN THIEF. TYPICALLY A MAN DRESSED AS A WOMAN, PRESUMABLY MEANT TO BE A WOMAN WHO STEALS CHICKENS FROM PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. DRESSED IN COLORFUL, FLAMBOYANT DRESSES, WITH EXAGGERATED HIPS AND MAKE-UP, THE “ROBA LA GALLINA” USUALLY CARRIES A BIG PURSE FILLED WITH CANDIES TO THROW INTO THE GATHERED CROWD. THE PURSE SYMBOLISES WHERE THE WOMAN WOULD HIDE HER STOLEN CHICKEN.

JOHN ALBERTO IS ONE OF THE YOUNG INNOVATORS OF CARNAVAL IN SANTIAGO. HE CREATED A HYBRID VERSION OF A “ROBA LA GALLINA” AND INTERTWINED IT WITH ANOTHER CHARACTER, WHICH IS THE “LECHON”. THE LECHON IS THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE SANTIAGO CARNAVAL, AND THEY ARE A TYPE OF LAME DEVIL. THEY ARE DISTINGUISHED BY THEIR MASK, WHICH REPRESENTS THE FACE OF A PIG, WITH A LONG SNOUT AND LARGE HORNS, AND THEIR ELABORATE COSTUMES WHICH CARRY BELLS AND BOWLS USUALLY AROUND THEIR PANTS AND ARMS. THEIR ROLE IS TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN THE STREETS DURING THE FESTIVITIES, WHICH THEY ATTEMPT TO DO BY SPINNING THEIR WHIP IN THE AIR.

BRAULIO LOPEZ IS CONSIDERED A LEGEND IN CARNAVAL IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. HIS WORK CONSISTS OF A LOT OF INSPIRATION BEHIND THE HISTORY OF AFRICANS AND THEIR OVERCOMING OF STRIFE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD. BRAULIO HAS BEEN MAKING COSTUMES SINCE HE WAS 18 YEARS OLD AND HAS BEEN SEWING ALL OF HIS DESIGNS IN THE BASEMENT OF HIS MOTHERS HOUSE FOR OVER 20 YEARS.

XAVIER PERALTA IS A YOUNG DESIGNER WHO STARTED UNDER THE WING OF BRAULIO LOPEZ. XAVIER CREATES ELEGANT DRESSES AS WELL AS COSTUMES INSPIRED BY BRAZILIAN CULTURE. XAVIER, ALONG WITH HIS HAUS MEMBERS, COME TOGETHER AND CREATE DESIGNS FOR EVERY CARNAVAL EVENT IN THEIR RESPECTIVE CITY AND ARE LOOKING TO TAKE THEIR CREATIONS WORLDWIDE AND INSPIRE MANY OF THE LGBTQ MEMBERS INVOLVED IN COSTUME CREATION AND DESIGN.

ABOUT THE FILM

YO SOY CARNAVAL (I AM CARNAVAL) WAS CREATED TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN CONTRIBUTING TO THE CULTURE OF THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC BUT NOT HAVE BEEN GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW THEIR METHODS OF INNOVATION. ONLY 4 CONTRIBUTORS WERE INCLUDED IN THIS DOCUMENTARY, BUT THERE ARE MORE IN OTHER CITIES WHO ARE NOT REPRESENTED ENOUGH OR HAVE NOT HAD THE CHANCE TO SPEAK ON THEIR EXPERIENCES. THIS FILM ENCOMPASSES THE BACKGROUND OF EACH INDIVIDUAL AND THEIR SUPPORT SYSTEMS. IN A COUNTRY LIKE THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC WHERE RESOURCES ARE NOT AS ACCESSIBLE AS OTHER COUNTRIES, THESE PEOPLE FIND A WAY TO MAKE AMENDS WITH THE RESOURCES THEY HAVE IN ORDER TO FULFILL THE ENJOYMENT OF BUILDING THEIR CRAFT. THROUGHOUT THIS FILM, EACH DESIGNER SPEAKS ON THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS IT TOOK TO OVERCOME THE PANDEMIC, CONTINUE THEIR PROGRESS IN THE WORK THEY DO AND INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS WHO WILL PASS ON THE TORCH TO CELEBRATING A FESTIVAL THAT'S BEEN CARRIED ON FOR OVER A CENTURY.

CAST

DENISE LEON (ROBA LA GALLINA)



XAVIER PERALTA (BRASILEIRO)



JOHN ALBERTO (HIBRIDO-ROBA LECHON)



BRAULIO LOPEZ (AFRICA)











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Cesar Ernesto García

Denise Leon John Alberto Braulio Lopez Xavier Peralta

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Denise Leon John Alberto Braulio Lopez Xavier Peralta



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Cesar Ernesto García

CREDITS

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ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

BORN IN HARLEM, RAISED IN THE BRONX OF NEW YORK, CESAR ERNESTO GARCIA IS AN INDEPENDENT MULTIMEDIA ARTIST WHOSE PARENTS IMMIGRATED FROM THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

HIS WORK CONSISTS OF PHOTOGRAPHS, VIDEOGRAPHY, SOUND AND VISUAL ART IN MANY DIFFERENT PLACES AND CONTEXTS.

WITH BACKGROUND TRAINING AND SELF TAUGHT EXPERIENCE, CESAR THRIVES IN HOPES OF ACCOMPLISHING HIS DREAMS OF BECOMING AN INDEPENDENT FILMMAKER/DIRECTOR.