

## SEATTLE'S BLACK COMMUNITY FESTIVAL

As we now know it, The Black Community Festival formally known as "The Mardi Gras Festival" historically began in 1950 as the "South Business District International Carnival".

In the year of 1948, the Jackson Street Community Council worked together with Blacks, Asians, Filipino, and Whites in a mutual endeavor. Two years later, in 1950, the first International Carnival was planned as an annual event and signified both an improvement in the race relations of the community, and what could be first step towards a tourist attraction.

The first carnival began with a procession, not a parade. Parades were not allowed in Seattle, by ordinance afternoon. A colorful stage production was presented at 8th Avenue South and King Street. Featured were traditional Japanese and Filipino Dances, Chinese opera, ballet and tap dancers, and touch and spiritual singers. James Washington a black sculptor from the Community was also featured.

Another Big hit in 1951, The East Madison/East Union Mardi Gras Festival added some off the Mardi Gras spirit to Seafair. The illuminated parade proceeded south on 4th Avenue from Stewart to James and the Mardi Gras Queen rode in a beautiful flowered float.

For many years following the Mardi Gras Festival was the highlight of the Community. Carnival activities, Ballroom and Street dances, colorful costumes, creole foods, varied entertainment and exhibits of international attractions were enjoyed by all citizens and was the pride of the Black Community.

This years Black Community Festival marks the return of Community spirit in this historical tradition. The Theme "Coming Together" expresses a belief in the positive presentation of Black Culture and the longstanding cohesiveness with the Summer Seafair events.