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**Beatin' Dong de Establishment:
Steelband as an anti-colonial artform in Trinidad and Tobago**

While many scholars in recent years have discussed the steelband movement in Trinidad and Tobago in terms of its history and evolution, fewer have examined closely the way that this artform was used as a weapon against the colonial powers. What may have seemed as a form of entertainment for the freed slaves in the backyards of Port-of-Spain was in fact a significant statement against the colonial authorities who were neither prepared nor interested in securing a viable life for the blacks after slavery. Furthermore, the blacks were positioned against the newly arrived indentured laborers which resulted in resentment and violence, the traces of which can still be felt today.

This paper will examine how the steelband movement was in effect an anti-colonial artform designed to beat out a path of freedom that was not guaranteed by the proclamation of emancipation. The argument here is that this musical form was far beyond a means of entertainment or an escape from boredom, but in fact was a strategic attempt by blacks in Trinidad to have their political say in a social arena, since their voices effectively remained silenced while the colonial authorities remained in power. This paper will also show the potency of this movement in the pre-independence years, which gives valid explanation to why the artform changed in character from the sixties until today.

Finally, this paper explores the ways in which the steelband movement became an instrument of revolution in the way that it fostered unity among freed blacks united against the colonial authorities, created an identity for freed blacks in the aftermath of slavery, and forged a vehicle through which the freed blacks expressed their collective voice and rallied against the Crown.