

The Hare Krishnas bring 5,000-year-old tradition to Bud Billiken Parade



ISKCON Chicago's devotees bring Swami Ji Srila Prabhupada, message of "Krishna Consciousness Moment" to Bud Billiken Parade. [Courtesy of ISKCON Chicago]

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In The Bud Billiken Parade is the largest Afro-American parade and the second largest parade in America next to the Rose Parade. It is celebrated to honor black history and also inspire the youth to begin the next school year. Billiken is a guardian angel, a patron saint of children in Chinese mythology. The parade was initiated by Robert S. Abbott who is known as the father of black journalism. This year marked the 94th celebration of this parade.

The Bud Billiken Parade is more than a procession of bands and floats marching down King Drive, it's a commemoration of our past and a celebration of our future. Every summer since 1929, "The Bud" has united African-Americans throughout the city of Chicago in music, dance, food, and laughter. It's one of the only spaces where we can openly and emphatically praise the historic roots that plant us into the South Side of Chicago. This year parade was on Saturday, Aug. 12, at East 35th Street and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Throng of people flocked together as the floats paraded down Martin Luther King Jr. drive. The parade traditionally begins in Bronzeville, at Oakwood Boulevard and ends at Garfield boulevard, 55th. street. The air was filled with youthful joy and energy. Religion, music, and dance has always been a huge part of the black culture and it was beautifully showcased on every float.

Among all the floats was a representation of the Hare Krishnas. They have a center in the south suburbs of Chicago, "The Hare Krishna Temple of the Heart," who have been participating in the Bud Billiken parade for the last 20 years. Gaura-mani Das said, "We are grateful to be part of the parade and bring the Holy Names of God to the community. The name of God is held in high esteem in all religions. We are representing the vedic culture which is 5,000 years old."

Srila Prabhupada came to the west to bring this culture to America in 1969 and he translated about 80 volumes of the Sanskrit texts into English. Among his major contributions

were his translation of Bhagavad Gita As It Is and Srimad Bhagavatam.

"We proudly marched the streets of Chicago at the 94th annual Bud Billiken parade. We were proud to be a part of this lively celebration of culture, history, and progress" said by Lila Manjari devi dasi

The devotees brought a beautiful form of Lord Jagannatha on the float and chanted the Hare Krishna maha mantra.

Syama Priya Devi Dasi said "God is one. We are all his children. Lord Jagannatha is on our float to spread love. He is Krishna with a dark blue hue. We sing and dance to praise the Lord."

The devotees handed out pamphlets about the significance of chanting the Holy names of the Lord and sang. The organizers thanked the Hare Krishna's for spreading love and spirituality by their presence.

The parade ended on 55th street and with the organizers recognizing and thanking each float at their reviewing stand at 52nd street.