



# Mardi Gras Productions

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My name is Arthur J. Tisi. My Grandfather was issued the first permit to conduct a street festival in New York City in 1926. This was for the San Gennaro Festival.

In those days the Irish (God bless them) controlled the Catholic Church and would not allow the “WOPS” to display the statue of San Gennaro in a street procession and therefore refused to allow the statue of San Gennaro out of the church. My Grandfather told the clergy he understood and quickly put together a committee of Neapolitans who stole the statue of San Gennaro when the church closed. The rest is history.

My Grandfather knew that a street festival was not about church rules but would be an excellent way for the hard working poor immigrants in the community to earn money to feed their families while perfecting their talents.

So too today’s street fairs are about giving minorities, women, people of color and immigrants a venue to enter the retail world by utilizing their talents to support their families.

There are no problems with street festivals which financially support thousands of fair vendors and provide a day of free entertainment for New Yorkers and tourists alike. The only problem here is a handful of nay Sayers who only think of themselves.

We know our great Mayor will not be conned into destroying so many lives by these negative self-serving meddlers.

Was my Grandfather correct?

Because of street fairs in which my parents worked, I graduated Fordham University with a degree in Pharmacy and my late brother, Dr. G.M. Tisi was the Dean of the University of San Diego Medical School.

## Let’s talk about “self-serving meddlers.”

We were there and assisted with the late, great Mayor Edward I. Koch in the early seventies when S.A.P.O. was first developed. The purpose of S.A.P.O. was and still is to help *not-for-profit organizations and the like* to raise much needed funds and was not to create a high end or chic event. We knew then that along with helping the not-for-profits, S.A.P.O. would also help the poor and jobless in New York to stay off public assistance or welfare and earn much needed money to support their families. In those days the street vendors were mostly Italian Americans and Jewish Americans. In fact, Mayor Koch often proudly referred to his father as a *shlepper*. (Yiddish = a sales person who walked from house to house)

Today street festivals are about the not-for-profits, immigrants, women, people of color and African American Americans who deserve their chance at the American dream. **That’s all.**

## **SELF SERVING MEDDLER # 1**

### ***Who are these meddlers?***

Let's start with **Dan Garodnick** who says street fairs should be about local merchants and that people new to retail should apologize to him for not vending more chic & high-end products. Sorry Dan but all the vendors could not go to Dartmouth College like you and your rich friends did.

Local merchants 50% he says. Maybe if he bothered walking through his Congressional District he would see who the locals are: Staples, Citibank, Starbucks, Chase bank, Duane Read Pharmacy, Sprint cell phone stores, CVS and others who can afford the high rents.

Sorry Dan, no more local candy stores, all gone.

### ***What exactly did 50% local merchants per festival or no permit really mean?***

It means people of color, women and immigrants, all New Yorkers, stay out of Manhattan and work only in the outer boroughs where you live. Even though Manhattan is where the tourists are and retail sales are better, **STAY OUT**.

Did he forget that when he was campaigning to be elected, he and his father pitched a tent in 20 or more street festivals? They knew then that street festivals also "got out political messages." Their tent was at all Second & Third Avenue Festivals including:

*The Tilden Democrats Festival*

*17 Precinct Community Council Festival*

*Bellevue South Community Association Festival*

*Stuyvesant Park Neighborhood Association Festival*

*Turtle Bay Association Festival*

*13 Precinct Community Council Festival*

*Manhattan East Community Association Festival*

*Church of the Good Shepard Festival*

*Gustavus Adolphus Church Festival*

All of these groups supported his election. As of today, some of these groups who lost their festivals because of his headline grabbing rhetoric, no longer exist. Thanks Dan.

## **SELF SERVING MEDDLER # 2**

The non-elected head of the **TIMES SQUARE ALLIANCE**, **Tim Tompkins**, who feeds at the public trough and commands a salary of over \$400,000.00 a year. Almost twice the amount our elected Mayor, a humanitarian genius, is paid. Lest we forget, Mr. Tomkins must be thanked for giving us costumed comic book characters who hit the Police, bare breasted ladies of questionable repute and The Hug Guy to mention a few. All of whom extort tourists for cash.

He accepts noncompetitive bid food vendors and lines the BID area with them. Not being satisfied with all this, he and his puppet, Wally Rubin, the District Manager of Community Board #5, claim the Broadway theaters are burdened by street festivals which cause traffic problems. Saying this, they promote and possibly authored the new rules **prohibiting street festivals between 42<sup>nd</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> Street, between 6<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue.**

This means nothing and traffic to a theater is not a problem since all side streets are open to traffic, providing easy access to theaters. The imaginary traffic problem is so severe that you can't get a ticket for Hamilton for 10 years and the Broadway theaters are having their best year ever.

***Just what does this false rhetoric mean?***

**It means this is my area, I own it, SO STAY OUT!**

At a brief hallway meeting I had with Tim Tompkins at 100 Church Street on Oct. 13th. 2016, I tried my best to explain to him that if these "New Rules" passed, thousands of lives would be destroyed and how would he feel in 5 years knowing he was part of this treachery? But it fell on deaf ears.

Yes, I work for Mardi Gras Festival Productions and we resent the claims of Wally Rubin Community Board # 5 that "*not-for-profits who make small amounts of money by sponsoring these fairs and the producers who make the bulk of the money.*" We will produce upon request the number of festivals where Mardi Gras lost money or broke even. We continue to produce some of these events so that our vendor members and the not-for-profits could earn some desperately needed funds. We may be wrong, but we consider helping those in need to be good business.

We at Mardi Gras always knew that our great Mayor Bill de Blasio was not doing this. He said "*it was not something that I initiated.*"

He also was quoted as saying "*the proposed changes were the work of others in the administration and were already going forward when I heard about them.*" ... "*honestly, this is not one of my priorities.*" (NY Times Nov. 8, 2016)

That is why Mardi Gras has always encouraged our 2500 vendor members and their families to support Mayor de Blasio, who is one of the few in Government that has devoted his entire life to helping women, minorities, new citizens, people of color and African American Americans. Mardi Gras Productions, in addition to festival productions, it also is a membership organization counting 2500 vendors among its members.

**Just where did these treacherous "NEW RULES" come from?**

During a meeting at the office of Mardi Gras Productions on Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016 with Mr. Emil Lissauer a Bloomberg administration appointee and former Director of SAPO, he confessed "**I wrote these rules.**" Did he write them at the behest of the Times Square Alliance? He continued to tell us "**We were prevented from implementing these rules in 2015 by Corp. Council because they said they were Punitive.**"

The above was verified during a phone call with Gabe Taussig an attorney at Corp. Council (now retired) who was assigned to advise SAPO.

When these rules were first proposed we noticed the following: after the City collects a permit fee for any special event or displays, on Broadway btw 41<sup>st</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> Street. The Times Square Alliance Collects an additional concession fee as high as **\$28,000.00** a day.

(See exhibit A)

Although all the Rules were not implemented, this was and special event organizers have been compelled to pay this fee.

We hope Mr. Tompkins understands Malcolm Gladwell's Theory

*"Bad things mount up, then suddenly, at a dramatic moment everything comes crashing down."*

We have given our opinion and understanding of why these NEW RULES are Treacherous.

Now you decide.