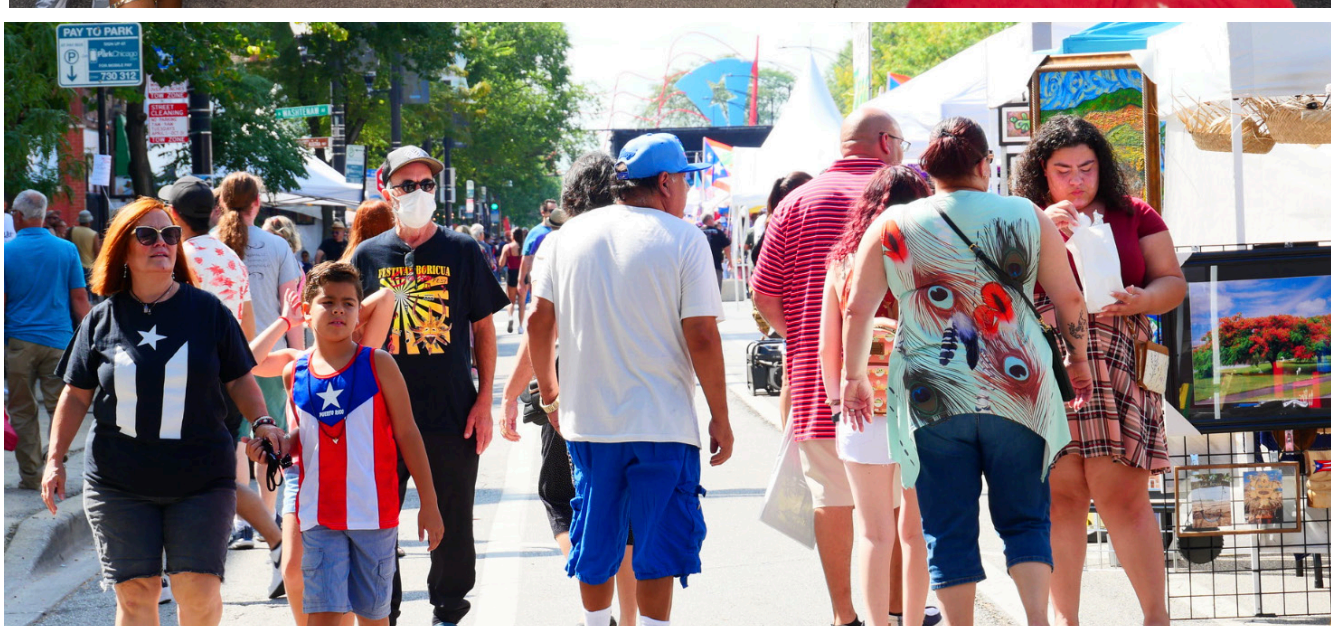


Fiesta Boricua Organizers, Police Say There Was No Shooting At Weekend Event – Despite Media Reports



By: Mina Bloom for Block Club Chicago

The Puerto Rican Cultural Center prioritizes community safety at all our annual Fiesta Boricua celebrations – just as we do every day. Recently, we have opened a new department dedicated to violence prevention and intervention. This department seeks to provide services to youth and adults within the Humboldt Park community; it centers restorative practices, decolonization, and healing. During this year’s Fiesta Boricua a conflict arose, but the Violence Prevention and Intervention Department responded quickly with de-escalation and mediation. When the police shut down Fiesta Boricua on Saturday evening, the Violence Prevention and Intervention Department put in overtime doing street intervention, thus ensuring the conflict was mediated, and that Fiesta Boricua would continue Sunday without issue. The Puerto Rican Cultural Center and community members were disappointed with the inaccurate and sensationalist media coverage of the 29th Annual Fiesta Boricua celebration. This coverage included an absurd report that the festival was shut down because of a shooting. Read on to learn the truth that there was no shooting at Fiesta Boricua, and read the community responses to the festival and biased media coverage.

Police shut down Humboldt Park’s Fiesta Boricua over the weekend due to a fight on festival grounds, and initial reports someone had been shot during the festivities were wrong, organizers said. About 6:30 p.m. Saturday, a “physical altercation” broke out at the long-standing Puerto Rican festival as it was winding down, organizers said. Police emptied out the festival within “a matter of minutes,” organizers said. The festivities were slated to end at 8 p.m. A police spokesperson declined to answer questions about the fight or what triggered the shutdown. CBS Chicago reported the shutdown occurred after someone was shot, but police had no record of a shooting on or near Division Street where the event took place. Organizers said someone had been shot on Washtenaw Avenue a couple of blocks away 30 to 45 minutes after the festival wrapped for the night, but police also have no record of anyone shot in that area. CBS later updated its story, saying police shut down the festival after

reports of people throwing bottles, saying someone was shot and critically wounded “a short time later and a couple of blocks away.” “The Puerto Rican Cultural Center is disappointed in the inaccurate and bias[ed] media coverage of this year’s annual Fiesta Boricua festival,” organizers with the Puerto Rican Cultural Center said in a written statement. “This year, like every year, we held multiple kick-off events and invited the media to showcase the best of our culture, but no major news outlets came to cover these wonderful events ... Instead, news outlets have published false headlines claiming that the 29th Fiesta Boricua festival was shut down due to a shooting.”

The 29th Fiesta Boricua De Bandera a Bandera kicked off noon Saturday with a lineup of Puerto Rican performances and food and art vendors, along with activities for kids. This year’s festival, billed as “a total immersion into Puerto Rican culture,” was a celebration of two long-standing Humboldt Park institutions: the 50-year-old Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos Puerto Rican High School and Café Teatro Batey Urbano, a cultural space and youth center that has called the neighborhood home for 20 years. Throngs of people filled Division Street to partake in the festivities Saturday. The festival also drew city leaders, including Ald. Roberto Maldonado (26th) and Mayor Lori Lightfoot, along with Luis Irizarry Pabón, the mayor of Ponce, Puerto Rico.

The festival went on as planned Sunday despite the scuffle. Organizers said they employed security guards, community leaders and groups trained in deescalation and mediation to keep festival-goers safe. Community leaders gathered Sunday evening to celebrate the recent landmark designation of Humboldt Park’s steel Puerto Rican flags, sculptures that serve as a powerful symbol of Puerto Rican pride in Chicago and throughout the Midwest.

“We invite the media to come see our community for who we truly are,” organizers said in the statement. “We have been resilient in the face of great obstacles. Through trials and tribulations this community always comes together to advance as a people, and these flags are a perfect symbol of this resiliency.”

Read Our Community’s Responses:

Lito Garcia · Follow

I love the way it was organized this year from the music, all the activities for the kids and opportunities for younger artists within the community to have a platform to showcase talent everything was beautiful it sad They always try to paint a negative narrative on our culture and community 🇵🇷🇵🇷🇵🇷

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Carm Garcia

Thank you to the committee for all of the hard work that goes into creating these events because it’s thru events and bringing people together that will also help our next generation know our culture. There is a lot of greatness in this community. #staystrong

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De Pura Ceba

Despite the smearing campaign and the fake news, the Puerto Rican community representing the Humboldt neighborhood in Chicago will continue to prevail as it has for over 70 years. Puerto Ricans in Humboldt as the world over will always stand tall in time of adversity and systemic oppression. ¡Viva The Paseo Boricua Flags of Steel and the 50th anniversary of the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School! ¡Viva The Puerto Rican Cultural Center! - Elliot

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