

Residents celebrate holiday with parranda

December 21, 2015 6:18 PM



[A parranda procession started in Melrose at 4 p.m.at the Bronx Documentary Center on Cortlandt Avenue. \(12/21/15\)](#)

THE BRONX - Bronx residents celebrated the holidays Puerto Rican-style Monday.

A parranda procession started in Melrose at 4 p.m.at the Bronx Documentary Center on Cortlandt Avenue.

A parranda is a group that goes around singing Christmas carols and using live instruments.

The group used traditional Puerto Rican instruments while parading from place to place, picking up people along the way.

[Video coverage of the event on news12.com](#)

LESSONS IN SHARING DISCRETION FROM WHEDCO IN THE BRONX

December 21, 2015

Posted at 06:27 pm in Community Revitalization, Health and Wellbeing, Infrastructure by The Intersector Project



The wide, straight boulevards in Crotona East in the Bronx encouraged speeding, and motorists frequently disobeyed traffic signals, creating dangerous conditions for pedestrians. Along Louis Niné Boulevard alone, there were an average of 1.8 injuries and 3.75 crashes each month during 2011 and 2012. Despite the high accident rate and the area's reputation as a site for drag racing and other infractions, the local police department did not enforce traffic laws effectively.

When Kerry McLean, Director of Community Development for the Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco), began working with businesses in 2009 to invigorate Crotona East's commercial corridor, residents and businesses identified pedestrian hazards as hindering access to neighborhood businesses, amenities, and public transportation. Their negative impact on community well-being prompted Kerry to lead a cross-sector collaboration with the Department of Transportation and Crotona East's residential, business, and social service communities to redesign the streets to improve pedestrian safety and access, creating both public space and greenery.

In redesigning the streets, the collaboration employed joint decision-making processes based on the expertise and experience of each partner and stakeholder — government, community members, and businesses — employing a tactic The Intersector Project Toolkit refers to as Share Discretion. Sharing discretion is the deliberate allocation of decision-making authority according to area of expertise, which allows the collaboration to benefit from the varying expertise and experience of each partner and gives each partner a distinct stake in the collaboration. Entrenched in the reality of local needs and strengths, community residents and businesses collaborated with government officials to prioritize issues that could be addressed based on available resources. After initial input from the community and local non-profit service

MOTT HAVEN HERALD

Bronxites Celebrate 'El Dia de los Muertos'

By Tadia Toussaint on November 3, 2015 7:35 am



Photo by Jordan Guerra, WHEDco

Latinos celebrated the Mexican 'Day of the Dead' in Melrose Bright yellow flowers, orange pumpkins and white skulls decorated the plaza on Brook Avenue and E. 163 Street, where many South Bronx residents came to celebrate El Dia De Los Muertos (the Day of the Dead) on October 21.

The Mexican holiday—in which people honor the souls of their lost loved ones—brought families together for dance, food, art and even health, in a way residents say they don't often see.

DNAinfo.com

"Queen of Doo-Wop" to Perform Free Show in The Bronx

By [Eddie Small](#) | October 28, 2015 3:54pm

SOUTH BRONX — The "Queen of Doo-Wop" is coming to The Bronx for a free concert.

Arlene Smith, who became famous in the 1950s as lead singer of the girl group [The Chantels](#), will perform on Oct. 28 at 7 p.m. in [Pregones Theater](#) on Walton Avenue between 149th and 150th streets, where the [Bronx Music Heritage Center](#) will honor her as a living legend.



Designed by Jordan Guerra, WHEDco

The Chantels consisted of Smith and four other girls who all attended St. Anthony of Padua Elementary School in The Bronx and also belonged to [St. Anthony's church choir](#).

"We came through at a very interesting time, musically, where everything was coming together," Smith said. "You had the pop that was played on the pop stations. You had the music that was being discovered, the black radio that was coming to the fore."



Music Heritage Center celebrates Day of the Dead

Updated October 21, 2015 6:48 PM



Some Bronx residents celebrated Dia De Los Muertos -- or the Day of the Dead -- early this year. (10/21/15)

MORRISANIA - Some Bronx residents celebrated Dia De Los Muertos -- or the Day of the Dead -- early this year.

Musicians performed traditional Mexican folk music at 163rd Street and Brooke Avenue Wednesday.

The Bronx Music Heritage Center hosted the event for its first time, and it seems to have been an early success.

The official holiday is actually Nov. 2, but few, if any, people in Morrisania seemed to mind.

[Originally story published on News 12 The Bronx](#)

DNAinfo.com

Here's Where You Can Celebrate Dia de Los Muertos in The Bronx

By [Eddie Small](#) | October 19, 2015 2:02pm

MORRISANIA — Bronxites looking to celebrate [Día de los Muertos](#) this year can head over to Brook Avenue and East 163rd Street for a free street festival.

The [Bronx Music Heritage Center](#), part of the [Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation](#), will put on the festivities from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Oct. 21 to celebrate the Mexican holiday meant to honor the dead.



"Halloween tradition is more commercial and ghoulish," said Kerry McLean, director of community development at WHEDco. "This is more really paying homage to those who have passed away."

The event will include free health screenings, pop-up markets, a dance workshop from [Calpulli Mexican Dance Company](#) and live music from the band [Mariachi Real De Mexico](#).



THE INDYPENDENT

Do Not Let The Reclamation of The Bronx's Cultural Legacy Spur More Gentrification

BY **MARK NAISON** | OCTOBER 19, 2015

It is great to see the cultural landmarks of the Bronx, such as the street jazz great Maxine Sullivan lived on, be officially recognized by the New York City Council. And great to see the incredible musical legacy of the Bronx honored by programs like the Bronx Music Heritage Center of [WHEDCo](#).

But it will all go to naught if the Bronx becomes a hot tourist site, is discovered by developers, and rents start to skyrocket, so that current residents are forced out and the young people who now live in the neighborhood will not benefit from the inspiring history that is being uncovered and shared.

Given what has happened in Park Slope, Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Williamsburg, Harlem and the Lower East Side, and given what is starting to happen in [Bushwick](#), Bedford Stuyvestant and Washington Heights, that scenario is hardly a remote possibility.

The late Morgan Powell warned us what was coming when he sounded the alarm about the market rate housing that was being approved for the [West Farms area](#), and those alarms should go off extra loud given the luxury towers slated to be built across from Harlem near the Third Avenue Bridge.

The many people who have worked so hard to gain recognition for the diversity and resilience and cultural creativity of Bronx neighborhoods before during and after the disinvestment cycle hit the borough did not do so to make the Bronx a site of [real estate investment](#) and cultural tourism that would leave its working class and immigrant population out in the cold, or displaced into nearby suburbs.

But unless its residents and community leaders and elected officials mobilize NOW to make sure Bronx communities remain affordable and prevent displacement, the worst is sure to come

Mark Naison is a Professor of African-American Studies and History at Fordham University and Director of Fordham's Urban Studies Program. This article originally appeared at [withabrooklynaccent.blogspot.com](#).

[Original story published on indypendent.org](#)

Ramon Ponce, director of the band, stressed that Día de los Muertos was not meant to be a morbid holiday, despite its focus on death.

"It's really not a sad day, but it's like a festive day because they celebrate the souls," he said.

The music tends to reflect this upbeat mood, he continued.

"People request songs that the loved ones who are gone liked," he said. "So, you know, we can play anything, but it's mostly lively music."

Traditional songs to celebrate the holiday include "La Bruja" and "Las Golondrinas," according to Ponce.

This is the first year that the Bronx Music Heritage Center has put together a Día de los Muertos celebration, and it is in keeping with the group's goal of celebrating different musical traditions in the borough, according to McLean.

It is also the first year that Mariachi Real De Mexico will perform at a Día de los Muertos celebration in The Bronx, and Ponce said he was very excited about it, especially given the borough's large Hispanic population.

"It's always great to know that people are willing to come out with the tradition and the music," he said. "For us, it's just a way to share our music and culture with other people from different parts of the city."

[Original story published on dnainfo.com](https://www.dnainfo.com)

The girls hit it big in the late 1950s when they released "Maybe," which became a major hit and was the first song by a girl group to sell a million records.

[Rolling Stone](#) also ranked the song at 199 on their 2011 list of the [500 Greatest Songs of All Time](#), putting it just ahead of "[Don't Be Cruel](#)" by Elvis Presley and just behind "[Sweet Child O' Mine](#)" by Guns n' Roses.

Smith described music back then as extremely raw and genuine.

"There was very, very little enhancement," she said, "and the artist, what you heard is what they were feeling and what they were singing."

The Bronx Music Heritage Center, part of the [Women's Housing and Economic Development Corporation](#), uses its Living Legends series to honor artists who have contributed significantly to music genres that were developed or innovated in The Bronx.

Past honorees include [hip-hop](#) founding father [DJ Kool Herc](#) and jazz pianist [Bertha Hope](#).

Despite growing up in The Bronx, Smith gave her parents more credit than the borough itself for influencing her musical career.

"I lived in The Bronx, but I lived in my home," she said, "and my biggest influences were my parents, my mother and father."

[Original story published on DNAinfo.com](#)

With his face covered in red sugar crystals from his pan de muerto (death bread), the skull-shaped bread traditionally eaten during the holiday, 5-year-old Mexican-American, Omar Guerrero declared “This is so much fun!”

The Bronx Music Heritage Center hosted the event in partnership with its parent organization, community development organization Women Housing and Economic Development (WHEDco), and the Department of Transportation.

Guerrero, a student at WHEDco’s after-school program, came with his mother, Guillermina DeJesus, who said she honors her brother and father on the day. Though the two passed away in Mexico many years ago, she sets their favorite dish on the table, along with candles and Cempacuchil (yellow flowers), and hopes to feel their spirit. “I like to bring Omar to these kinds of things. He has to know where he comes from,” DeJesus said. “He doesn’t know completely what the holiday is about but he knows it’s a part of his culture. He thinks this is Halloween, and for now that’s ok.”

The festival offered arts and craft activities for children and free flu shots, and had fresh produce including apples, onions, and carrots available for sale. One table served hot cider and hot chocolate with flavored bread, conchas and pan de muerto.

A DJ played music from across Latin America, like bachata and merengue, until finally a guitarist wearing a sombrero played Mexican folk songs to serenade the festival’s attendees. Dancers from a Mexican dance company taught the audience Mexican dance steps while he played.

WHEDco, in conjunction with a private developer and city agencies, is building a facility adjacent to the plaza, to be known as Bronx Commons, will house the Bronx Music Heritage Center, which is now temporarily housed in Soundview.

“The South Bronx has always been a refuge for people with rich cultural traditions, said WHEDCo’s director of community development, Kerry A. McLean. “Events like this are designed to connect these cultural traditions.” The project is scheduled to be completed by 2017 and will offer affordable housing for elderly musicians, along with commercial space and educational facilities.

“I’m waiting to get in there,” said nearby resident, Chereen Morris, 38.

“It’s something productive to do with the kids. The neighborhood is changing and it’s for the better.” She and her 3-year-old son danced with the Mexican dancers near the stage.

Mexicans aren’t the only Hispanic group who celebrate the holiday. WHEDCo-employee Luz Lopez, who is originally from Ecuador, said that she honors her grandmother and her uncle by preparing ceviche, since that was her favorite dish.

“Though we are celebrating the life of the dead, this is very separate from Halloween,” she said. “It’s very spiritual,” she said. Contact Tadia Toussaint at tadia.toussaint@journalism.cuny.edu.

[Original story published in the Mott Haven Herald.](#)

providers, the Department of Transportation used its expertise in traffic patterns to develop an initial streetscaping plan. The plan was presented to WHEDco, the Community Board, local residents, and businesses for review, which resulted in the incorporation of green space and greater accessibility to bus platforms for elderly residents. Based on business input, parallel parking spaces were added in specific areas to ensure customer access. After review by all stakeholders, the DOT broke ground to execute the collaborative streetscaping plan.

Through collaboration, the construction of the streetscaping project began in spring of 2012. The shortened crosswalks, green medians, widened sidewalks, and reconfigured traffic patterns have improved pedestrian safety in the neighborhood, and have created an overall positive walking experience. The project was successful in reversing the image of Crotona East as an area of urban decay, and in repairing the relationship between a community which had long felt ignored by those in power. Since project completion in 2012, there has been a:

- 45 percent decrease in traffic related injuries.
- 65 percent decrease in the number of motorists speeding in either direction on Boulevard.
- 33 percent increase in pedestrian volume at main intersection.

[Story originally published on intersector.com](#)