

Afro-Latino Culture Fest celebrates community in downtown Los Angeles

UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and Latina Futures 2050 Lab were among the event sponsors. The gathering brought in more than 2,500 attendees

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By Sandra Baltazar Martínez

sbmartinez@chicano.ucla.edu

More than 2,500 people attended the fourth annual Afro-Latino Culture Fest, — a celebration Sharon Cruz, the event’s executive director, had been slowly building upon for more than 30 years.

The August 1 fest took place at LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes in downtown Los Angeles and welcomed more than 20 vendors. The UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center (CSRC), [Latina Futures 2050 Lab](#), and the [UCLA Ralph J. Bunche Center for African American Studies](#) were among the event sponsors.

Cruz grew up in South Central L.A., where she learned from age 16 to create a shared space that celebrated her family, friends, and neighbors. As a teenager, she organized a theater performance at Roosevelt Park; decades later, she established the non-profit Afro-Latino Education and Arts Collective in L.A. One of the collective’s initiatives is the Afro-Latino Culture Fest, designed to celebrate Afro-Latino food, music, ingenuity, and art while capturing — and documenting — Afro-Latinos’ untold stories.

“We are honored to support these community-centered events such as Sharon’s Afro-Latino Culture Fest because we understand the importance of cultivating acceptance and celebrating all the amazing contributions our families and neighbors offer,” said Celia Lacayo, CSRC assistant director. Lacayo and Cecilia Nuñez coauthored the essay, “Afro-Latinas and Their Growing Diversity and Contributions” in the [Spring 2026 issue of *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies*](#). The essay, part of a special Latina Futures dossier, includes discussion of Cruz’s efforts to reshape public narratives about race, belonging, and diaspora in relation to the Afro-Latina community.

At the cultural fest, attendees had the opportunity to visit vendors of art and jewelry, taste food from countries such as Honduras and the Dominican Republic and stop by information booths

for the CSRC and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP), among others. Children and adults alike moved to Cuban rhythms brought by the Ocandeniye Dance Company, enjoyed an opera performance by Dr. Zuly E. Inirio, and danced beyond sunset to the mixes of DJ Supernova.

Creating an annual celebration of cultures is a way to honor children, elders, leaders, and everyone who coexists in a community, Cruz said.

“This is what community looks like. This is what belonging feels like,” Cruz told attendees the day of the festival. “Because culture is one of the most powerful bridges we have. It reminds us that although we come from many nations... we share the same heartbeat.”