



What is up with ¡Globalquerque!?

Some of you may have noticed the lack of activity coming from Team ¡Globalquerque! over the past months, including not announcing dates for 2023, Early Bird ticket sales, etc. We are now ready to make what has been happening public. This statement is a bit long, but we wanted to let you know as much of the background as we could. (And you do want to get to the end!)

In all of my decades in the music business, including the past two in New Mexico, I have never experienced anything quite like what I have experienced with the National Hispanic Cultural Center (NHCC) under their leadership of the past year or so, particularly with ex-Executive Director Margie Huerta, Artistic Director Noel Merriam as well as long-time NHCC Deputy Director Alberto Cuessy.

We patiently waited for months after the last ¡Globalquerque! ended for an answer to an historically simple question we first posed in August of 2022: “Can we confirm this year’s dates? Dates which have been on the calendar with the NHCC for years, and a question we never actually had to ask about before. We were finally called to a “meeting” in January of this year - 6 months after first asking about our dates and with the NHCC continuously not meeting their own deadlines, a new feature there it seems. We were informed that the NHCC would no longer be partnering with Avokado Artists to present ¡Globalquerque!. There was no discussion allowed. We were told if we wanted to remain at the facility it would be as a straight rental and we would no longer be able to use any of their staff, many of whom have worked with us for years, some since the inception of the festival. They did not at the time, however, present a rental proposal or have any idea what the rental quote would be! The meeting lasted 5 - 10 minutes.

When we finally did receive the rental quote after a couple of more weeks of missed, promised deadlines, it was not only convoluted but included charges for things and parts of the campus we have never before utilized among other errors. This added another week or more to getting a real proposal that in the end would have increased our budget by tens of thousands of dollars. In addition, the rental agreement and its demands were out of step with performing arts and cultural centers around the country, and frankly, contained even more roadblocks than those previously experienced leading up to the 2022 edition of the festival, making it untenable to say the least. This after the NHCC had failed to meet some of its partnership obligations in 2022! It is not what one would expect from an organization one has partnered with successfully these past 18 years. (Have I yet mentioned how unprofessionally and disrespectfully we were treated while waiting, not to mention in the lead to the 2022 edition of the festival?).

This decision by the NHCC put us in a precarious position, not only financially, but reputation-wise. An event like ¡Globalquerque! secures its operating budget well in advance and to have it increased by tens of thousands of dollars nine months out is not an easy row to hoe. And, due to foot dragging by NHCC leadership, we were not able to keep to our historic grant writing, booking, and other schedules, promises and deadlines.

It likely goes without saying at this point that ¡Globalquerque! will not be returning to the NHCC for its 2023 edition.

In the lead up to the the 2022 festival it became increasingly clear that the current leadership had little interest in or understanding of ¡Globalquerque!. In fact, none of them had ever been to ¡Globalquerque!. In addition, it was clear very early on that both the Executive Director and the Artistic Director had very little understanding of the community that the NHCC and Avokado Artists/¡Globalquerque! serve, nor did they have any or very little understanding or relationship with the New Mexico arts community. They also showed that they did not have the requisite experience that one needs to helm an organization like the NHCC, and had no desire to learn from their experienced staff, many of whom have since left because of their style of leadership (or lack thereof).

The troubles with the NHCC leadership, the roadblocks they had put up and the balls they and some of their new department managers had dropped (and there were too many to list here) were finally brought to the attention of the NM Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) and Secretary Garcia y Griego. We were even granted a meeting with the Secretary post-¡Globalquerque!, which we had hopes would help clear the way to a smoother partnership going forward. We certainly felt during our conversation that the Secretary understood and empathized with the issues at hand, but in the end she decided to let the current leaderships' decisions take its course. As stated, those decisions led to them unceremoniously ending the partnership and ending ¡Globalquerque! at the NHCC. We also contacted the Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff Diego Arencon via email, *at his request*, and explained the situation, but as of this writing, there has been no response after multiple follow-ups, so....

There is more, but the above should give you an idea of the last year and our frustrating dealings with NHCC leadership.

Our decisions do not come lightly and, again, are not of our making. Indeed they have been beyond our control and heartbreaking. Moving ¡Globalquerque! from the campus around which it was designed and has evolved over the past almost two decades will be challenging. The NHCC has been home to ¡Globalquerque! since its inception. Alas, the actions by the NHCC leadership both in the lead up to the 2022 edition of the festival and since has made it consistently clear that we are no longer welcome there.

While ¡Globalquerque! is well respected across the country and around the planet as a world class and vital cultural and educational event, it seems that respect does not extend from the NHCC, its leadership of the past year plus or, it seems, DCA. I know that Avokado Artists is not the only arts, cultural or community group that feels this way. It should be mentioned that over the years ¡Globalquerque! and Avokado Artists has, conservatively, introduced hundreds of people to the NHCC, from near and far. We have held other events and concerts there and have helped promote many of the NHCC's non-Avokado Artists programs as well.

This move by the NHCC is all the more confusing and distressing as they lack the budget, and, again, with the aforementioned loss of key experienced staff (not that their suggestions or experience were heeded or valued by the NHCC leadership) and historically low staff

morale we and others have experienced, does not currently have the ability to mount an event like ¡Globalquerque! Obviously none of that matters to the NHCC leadership.

What is really sad is that with the right leadership and vision the NHCC really could be one of the crown jewels in performing, visual and educational arts in the state of New Mexico and the Southwest in both the Latin and non-Latin sectors. I truly hope that the NHCC will turn around in the coming years.

Enter Zach. I do want to give props to the new Executive Director Zack Quintero, who just completed his third week at the NHCC and took the time to reach out to me. He listened and apologized for things he had no part in. Our conversation was mutually respectful. I promised Zack to keep the line of communication open between us, and to be available and open, and I look forward to doing so as we move forward. All of us at Team ¡G! wish him the very best of luck in righting the NHCC ship. He is well aware that it will be more than just a bit of a task - indeed it will be a very heavy lift! - but he sounds up to it! Go, Zach!

That all said, ¡Globalquerque!'s is not going anywhere and we are chomping at the bit to fill you all in on a some of pretty cool happenings we are hatching that we really think (*know!*) you will dig! As they say, watch this space for a BIG announcement next Tuesday!

In closing, I want to personally give a heartfelt THANK YOU to all who have supported ¡Globalquerque! over the years. To our amazing tech teams, vendors and the many good folk at the NHCC past and present, THANK YOU! To our amazing volunteers, THANK YOU. To all our supporters and sponsors, THANK YOU! And last, but most certainly not least to YOU, our amazing Globalista community near and far: THANK YOU! You are the finest we could have ever wished for and we hope you will follow us to ¡Globalquerque!'s next iteration as we continue our mission of cross-cultural understanding through music and the arts and bringing the world to New Mexico and New Mexico to the world!

Stay tuned for what is next...

In solidarity and peace,
Tom Frouge
Executive Director
Avokado Artists / ¡Globalquerque!