

# [***'Freaknik' documentary producers and director didn't shy away from telling the full story***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BKP-K9B1-JBSS-S02G-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

March 20, 2024 Wednesday 2:30 PM GMT

Copyright 2024 Cable News Network All Rights Reserved

**Length:** 551 words

**Byline:** By Lisa Respers France, CNN

**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; When the documentary "[*Freaknik*](http://www.cnn.com/US/9704/18/briefs.pm/freaknik.index.html): The Wildest Party Never Told" was first announced, there were some concerns.

What began as a picnic for Atlanta [*HBCU*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/09/14/us/hbcus-gifted-124-million-investment-retention-enrollment-reaj/index.html) students in 1983, later grew into an annual spring break destination that attracted thousands from across the country. The thought of resurfaced footage from wilder days and a time before cell phones and social media didn't go over well with some attendees, now well into - or - past middle age.

"If you gonna tell the story, you have to tell the whole story," Nikki Byles, one of the producers of the documentary told CNN.

And that's what she and the production team set out to do.

The new documentary boasts among its executive producers hip-hop elders Luther "Uncle Luke" Campbell and Jermaine Dupri, along with rapper 21 Savage, who at 31 is too young to have attended Freaknik, but still celebrated his 30th birthday with a Freaknik-themed party.

"I think it speaks to this whole fact that there's a nostalgia about the nineties and wanting to go back to that time and that fun that we had," P. Frank Williams, who directed and executive produced the documentary, said of the fascination younger people have with the event that ended in 1999. "Freaknik has this sort of magical lore."

Williams compared it to a "Black Woodstock" with nostalgia, freedom, and, of course, music.

"Ironically, that's how we came up with the story because we were sitting in the office laughing and talking about how we would've acted with Freaknik," Byles recalled. "We were mad 'cause we (were too young at the time and) couldn't go."

The event helped give rise to Southern hip-hop and acts like OutKast, who were evangelized beyond Atlanta as attendees took their music back home to their cities after the event.

Deshawn Plair served as supervising producer on the documentary.

"It's also a coming-of-age story," Plair said. "You were able to come of age, but not have that pressure to have to be in the spotlight, not have that pressure to have cameras all over you. I think it was just such a bit of Black joy."

The filmmakers incorporated video footage from festival attendees and news reports to revisit what Freaknik was like. Part of that includes growing crowds that in some instances led to chaos and alleged crime, including [*reports*](https://mndaily.com/189301/uncategorized/women-assaulted-freaknik-fiesta/) of groping and sexual assault.

"In telling the full story of Freaknik, to omit the sexual assault and to omit the things that did cause harm is not allowing the full story to be told," producer Jay Allen said. "So we just wanted to make sure that as you watch this, that no other documentary about Freaknik ever has to be told."

Revisiting an historic cultural event through a modern lens, for Williams, meant exploring the problems, ***politics*** - and the fun - of Freaknik.

"I'm a documentarian of Black culture, and I wanted to give the vegetables and the candy. I think a lot of people are in love with the candy, which is the turn up at the street parties, the wilding out on the freeway, the going crazy in the middle of the street at Freaknik," Williams said. "I wanted to do a much more layered look."

"Freaknik: The Wildest Party Never Told" starts streaming on Hulu Thursday.

By Lisa Respers France, CNN

TM & © 2024 Cable News Network, Inc., a Time Warner Company. All rights reserved.

**Load-Date:** March 20, 2024

**End of Document**