

CREATENYC YOUTH FORUM, El Puente, 3/30/17

GROUP 1

Kaila, Ebony (facilitators), Kaila, Carmen, Imani, Rafael, Sky, Carmen, Maya, Jaden, William, Justin, Ebony
notetaker: Dylan

Safe space/important place in your neighborhood:

- Basketball court – it's therapeutic
- El Puente – can do dance and theater
- School
 - drama and dance class where we get to choose our own dance, research and choreograph
 - East coast swing and lindy hop
 - Learn from Youtube
 - Theater – get to perform and produce plays – have had 3 years to learn
- Professional performing art school
 - Drama major, some of the classes allow you to create poems, rap
 - Musical theater
 - Rose's Theater Kids – program
 - Create in my own room - can do music production
 - Don't have a place – out in the open

Events you like or want to be a part of:

- Puerto Rican Day Parade
 - Danced for 40 blocks with Santorico Co.
- Dia de los Muertos and Unity Day at El Puente Academy
 - Fly girl and Women's Power

Art classes you want to learn:

- Dance – house music
 - El Puente programs are free!
- Computer engineering and coding
- Illustration classes – trying to convey stories and narrative through drawing. Can't find classes like this.

The city should:

- Have after school programs for high school students that are free and accessible throughout the city – have high school hubs that serve a neighborhood
- Rec centers in parks – they're free for kids under 18
- They should advertise: that it's free for young people, what classes they offer
- They should have more arts programs
- University of the Arts (Philly) has class that youth can take in many disciplines – “artists

are born doing everything.”

- More programs like El Puente should be in every neighborhood – there aren’t a lot of “safe havens” in other neighborhoods.

What would be the best way to learn about these programs?

- Through schools: have announcements and posters
- Through word of mouth
- Depends on the kids’ situations as well

* Met intern – kids take over the Met! May 17

GROUP #2

Participant names unknown

Neighborhoods & Identity

- Painting, dancing, drawing, listening to music
- **Places:**
 - El Puente, school, my room
- **Challenges:**
 - Stereotypes of different cultural groups
 - Media discourages If we don’t look like the typical “model”
 - “Muslims are terrorists.”
- Safe place. Without it, it might be depressing
 - “Dance keeps me away from streets”
- Create a sense of community
- Find a group of people with things in common makes you feel comfortable
- Good/healthy food in school
- Joining a team – learn about what’s out there
- The same event in various places
- Block parties! A lot of things to do
- Suits everybody’s interest
- More diverse!
- Fliers and different days of the week
- Artist (museums) don’t represent who we are -> community
- People want to feel in control
- Like Beyonce!
- People with vocal talents – help build them up as artists

Getting the word out there

Caribbean night, parties, all types of dancing

Flyer for event. Parents bring dishes of different cultures

Potlucks

Wednesdays: museum trips

They used to have culture but cancelled all the programs – “the closest thing to arts is Spanish class.”

They take the dancers to Broadway

They have art class but nothing else, everything else is after school

What clubs would you create in college?

Dance club, video game, chess, robotics, movie, bracelet, shopping

My class made all the clubs

Every week we celebrate a different culture

GROUP #3

Enrique, Georgia, Rafaela, Yusef, Kimberly, Suki, Gabriella, Kalyssa Jose, Adam, Jenny, Osvaldo
notetaker: Emily Ahn Levy

Culture: Dominican, Mexican, Jewish, Bengali, Queens, art/painter – mural on Flushing at Dunkin Donuts, dance as communication, Spanish and Dominican restaurants

How to strengthen diversity in my neighborhood and our culture expressed into your community:

- Feels like there should be a place where people can express themselves, places and where there are multi-ethnic discussions
- **How should the city be able to implement arts and culture in your neighborhood?**
- Festivals based upon traditions and cultures – St. Nicholas
- More programs in East New York like El Puente – need places and opportunities to meet one another – seen (scene?) at the church near the train station
- Finds out about arts and culture at school or friends. The school should advertise programs at neighborhood arts and culture organizations.

What should the city do to support arts and culture?

- More carnivals
- More festivals
- Spread awareness through the internet to promote fundraising and activities

Where are some places that you feel like yourself?

- The park
- Community art space (ABC Rio with dark rooms for photographer)
- El Puente Bushwick and Williamsburg

What do you want more of?

- More spaces to create arts and culture. More studio space
- A place where people can dance wherever they want
- No gun violence, no drug related violence, where people are friendly and know one another
- Where people can be themselves, sense of community
- Express individuality without limits
- Where gender/sexuality is not an issue
- Where you don't have to worry at night
- Where you can dress however you want

- Where you can speak how you speak and no one judges you
- Where people aren't discriminated against

GROUP #5,

Katy, Richard, Jeimy, Luis, Magan, Nayelli, Joe-Anna

Notetaker: Adrienne Downey

Where is culture to you? Who Organizes Culture?

Williamsburg

- El Puente
- 4th & Bedford
- Street Festivals
- Food, dancing, games, Family history
- Connection even though I live somewhere else
- Increasing cost
- Tell more people! More communication

South side

- Express who I am

Bushwick

- Maria Hernandez Park
- Cinco de Mayo
- More inclusive, less separation of culture
- Weird to see people tell my family to leave

Harlem

- Malcolm X Boulevard
- African Americans
- Blacks
- Hispanics
- African **shops +** street performers
- Be more inclusive, stealing identity, we feel invaded
- Relationships we build – Hispanics
- Community-based businesses
- separation/selectionism makes take over easier
- Strengthen community, fight displacement

Flatbush

- Puerto Rican and Dominican locals facing displacement and gentrification pressure from wealthy white people
- Banding together local businesses to combat gentrification

Prospect Park

- Films and concerts
- How to strengthen information and advertising to promote cool free events and improve turn out

Washington Heights

- Hispanics and Dominicans
- Food and sharing
- Want to see more diversity

Hispanics

Relationships we build

Big Ideas

- 1. Unifying the community**
- 2. How do we feel about changes in the community?**
 - a. Diversity is good
 - b. Cautious optimism
 - c. Positive changes but with unforeseen consequences
- 3. Youth involvement and consultation, participation in developing the plans**

GROUP #6

[Andy, Chrissy, Naya, Jeremy, Melral, Jilly, Tiana, Briana, Monique, Jacky](#)
[notetaker: Rebecca Pryor](#)

- **What do you see as the important spaces**
 - Libraries
- Met Teens
- El Puente – I know most of the people and feel safe here

Who benefits?

- Teens

Why do you go there?

- Dance. It's my only way to stay out of trouble.

What don't you like?

- Nothing

How could it be better?

- Diversity – feels centered on the white community. To do a proposal to make other cultures feel welcome.

What are the spaces and places that enable people to feel creative?

- El Puente. We can make so many things.

- Museums. Welcoming, allow us to express ourselves. Able to research and coordinate events.
- El Puente. They allow us to improvise and add on to a piece. When I dance, I feel free, so being able to give my input makes me feel more free.
- We have so many choices here.

What do we need to make the space better?

- Bigger mirror, more space.
- Bigger dance studio for 48 dancers (El Puente)
- Better lighting, better set (Met)
- Better organization, so many boxes.

Are you able to find art and culture events that you can participate in?

- Teens Take the Met, especially the party aspect. Teens get to engage in many activities.
- Brooklyn Teen Night
- Need a space that can accommodate your age and have resources you need to partake in your activities.

For those interested in music, where do you go?

- I can go to clubs, so I'll go with my friends.
- All types of music. We look out for certain things.
- Music and DJs. I would go to a free DJ in the park event open to teens
 - I only do music, not dance because I was injured

Would you benefit from a space that specialized in injury from your art (kinesiology)?

- Yes. We would be more aware of the causes of injury and how to prevent them.
- Want more history and theory of the art to be better about it going forward

What do you need from the city to give you enhanced arts and culture?

- More resources. Expanding and renovating facilities
- If there was more money, I would put it in El Puente. For students, the facilitators to have more say in where the money goes.
- Funding for arts instructors
- Beacon program is MS 50 and MS 50 should have its own space, not enough facilities for the one space.
- More free space in schools
- The problem is the cost of a program needing new spaces. Think about all of the facilities needed for a new space.

GROUP #7

Participant names unknown

Community / Artform

notetaker: Caron Atlas

Dance major, PR and Dominican

Dance, Maspeth
Dance, Bushwick
Bensonhurst
Actor, Harlem, LGBTQ community
Castle Hill, Bronx, a cultural mix

Important Places and Spaces (like festivals parades and organizations):

- Where people can embrace their cultures
- Places that are open and public
- A lot of good things at parades.
- But sometimes there is violence and the police come
- Places where you can have pride in who you are.
- Places that help you be creative
- El Puente (raised often)
- Can do dance at Broadway Dance Center
- Schools – especially performing arts schools

Can you find events you want to participate in? How to make people aware of programs?

- Social media – posted online
- But you have to find it online – know what you are looking for
- Networking with your friends, at school, even your parents
- From my coaches at Laguardia High School – teachers give out flyers, info about master classes and events because they are connected with them
- A lot of people haven't heard about program, people not telling them about them.
- Make people aware of programs with posters and flyers
- Teachers should talk more about programs on loudspeaker at school

How can events be strengthened? What's missing?

- Make me a stronger dancer
- Need more funding in my school for better sets, costumes

What should city do to make city spaces that reflect more identities?

- Create more spaces
- More programs around Bushwick – they are always in Manhattan, not much out here

Can you be creative in your school?

- We have an extra hour in our school when I have step dancing
- At LaGuardia have dance three hours a day
- Museum School – have core classes 4 days a week – 1 day visit museums
- I wanted to do art, but I'm in the honors program. Couldn't take art classes I wanted to take.
- Wanted to make a portfolio for art school – she had to find a program herself – at Cooper Union. Not in Brooklyn.

Where are safe spaces?

- Here – el Puente. One spot where we can all go to and have a good time.
- It's very gentrified where I live in Bushwick and there are not many cultural spots – one place with bands but it's all white people.
- Not a lot of places in Manhattan. Only white people. Helps to be with people you are comfortable with. Where you aren't afraid to be who you are and be judged.
- Need more free after school programs
- Need more places like el Puente
- Support at schools like LaGuardia

How did you know you wanted to be a dancer (artist) What does it mean to you? How does it impact your life?

- I started when I was 3 – it made the family watch, and made him feel good. “It gave me a feeling nothing else did.”
- I started as a hobby, came to el Puente and my passion grew there. It helped me interact with people.
- “Dancing is like an escape. It's not easy. It's hard. I wanted to give up. It puts me in a state of a stable mind. I forget about stress, can keep improving.”
- “Art is my way of expressing myself. At first to take my mind off things. Now I use art as a way to expand my ideas.”
- Bummer at high school – no dance program. I miss it. I got injured and I miss it. Dance really big in my culture as a Dominican.
- “Acting – it was stuff to do. I started liking it. It was a way to express myself. I was shy. It helps with public speaking and learning – for example with a history piece – helps me absorb the material.”
- When you're acting you are two different people. I'm a drama queen. At first it was frustrating. I couldn't find anything inexpensive and nearby. Downtown Art. I wasn't the only black person there. Being able to do something you love. Being able to talk in front of people. I knew I always loved performing – danced when I was young – Dad cheered me on. I got on the table and acted out. Leave all the stress from school. Something you love. Leave things behind and be yourself.

Summary recommendations (group #7):

- Need better networking opportunities – communications to know about programs.
- More free cultural programs where you can be yourself – more program choices, more ways to bring people together.
- We have a voice and we need to use it to protest and get what we want.

Group #9

[Omari, Jaslin, Nyline, Ryan, Shadae, Alex, Kevin, Jaylin, Aniya, Carlos](#)
[notetaker: Aura Dawson](#)

Places to express culture:

- Bushwick El Puente Studio – many activities for youth
- Mural of Biggie Smalls
 - freestyle rap battles

- Independence (El Puente) - art
- Latin American restaurant – food and music
- El Puente Summer camp – art and culture

Opportunities for culture:

El Puente

After school programs

Need/Change:

Need:

- Materials
- Video production to share story
- Programs/spaces for older generations
- Opportunities for multi-generation
- Cooking
- Performances

Change:

Only allowing one discipline versus multiple

What we need more of:

- Parks in Williamsburg
- Trees
- Local businesses, not chains (bodegas)
- Affordable housing
- Community spaces
- Places in common

How to make or spaces better:

- Cleanliness/sanitary
- Renovating into space they actually want to be
- Free wi-fi – music, meeting people
- More attention to community space

Programs...

Like:

- Art

Dislike:

- Peer education

How do you find opportunities?

- Ask around - friends
- Walk around

- Online
- Family
- Sometimes it's difficult to find places that are free and quality
- Areas don't always have/use connections – arts and programs, share information

What can the city do to connect spaces to our culture?

- Insight, introductions, sharing
- Mixed cultures not exclusive to one kind
- Familiar faces
- Multi-lingual
- Expand on smaller sites that are growing in number and need bigger spaces
- Listen to the voice of the community and doing what the community wants
- More materials/funding
- More educational/arts trips

More opportunities for cultural exposure

BELOW NOTES MUST COMPRISE GROUPS #4 and #8 AND SUPPLEMENT NOTES ABOVE

GROUP # 4

Participant names unknown

Spaces and Places That Encourage Creativity

- Schools should encourage creativity rather than strictly focus on math and sciences
- Community centers
- Parks
- Home – your closet, your kitchen (creative with food)

What don't you like?

- At home – other people
- People taking this space for granted
- Being discouraged by people in these spaces

What would make these spaces stronger?

- More outreach
- More events
- spirituality

Are you able to find arts and culture events you like and want to participate in?

Yes, but also not accessible/unaffordable

What should the city do to make sure arts and culture spaces reflect community?

- Reflect/base on community
- Media coverage (journalists) to share highlight within community for an accurate representation
 - People

- Narrative comes directly from community
- Share underused spaces. For making and sharing work

Should the city support arts and culture? How?

- YPI grants
- Show up
- More free art programs and opportunities

Where...

- El Puente
- Harlem
- Installations sponsored by museums
 - Local artists from NYC communities

What can NYC do to get youth enjoying arts and culture?

- Competition with relevant prizes - Work showcas, Arts materials
- More activities
- Local festivals featuring local creators (film, food and more)

GROUP # 4

Participant names unknown

Culture:

- Music
- Dialect
- Shared perspective (happy good vibes)
- Food
- Style (passed down)
- Ancestry - stories/history/music traditions

Place and Space:

- Community based organizations
- El Puente
- Parks
- Museums (Bk)

○ **Who uses these spaces?**

- Community members
- Visitors to the community

What don't you like?

Lack of diversity
Closed mindedness

What do you like?

- Safe Space
- Home
- Aware of who visits

What would strengthen these spaces?

- Unity
- Community conscious, awareness, outreach
- Propaganda
- No police presence because we feel targeted and unprotected; counter unity w. police

Group #

Participant names unknown

Important places to celebrate traditions:

- Block parties, festivals, parades, stoops

Used by?

Residents

What you like about events?

- Different cultures

What don't you like?

- Heavily policed events in communities of color
- Respecting the way people choose to convene, i.e music complaints
- Only celebrated that day, negative vs. positive exposure in media

How to strengthen events:

- Radio, ads (but expensive)
- Internet
- Funding

What places let you be creative?

- Home
- park (places to breakdance, skatepark)
- community center
- shows
- Williamsburg pier – accessible but renovations have changed the vibe
 - how can gentrifiers make connections with locals? Ask them what they need!
 - People need to respect cultural norms of communities that exist in each area, be flex with noise/music.

Can you find arts/cultural events you like?

- YMCA, need more communities with arts focus

- The future Project – help kids connect with different cities at different schools
- El Museo – women’s month
- The Door – dance LES
- The Possibility Project – off Broadway musical

How do you find out about opportunities?

- Community Action Project

Where can we create new resources for teens?

- Library – open more hours
- Park – clean/fix
- Distribute funding to grassroots organizations

Word of mouth

What should the city do to help you be creative?

- Public space
 - Invest more in maintenance of fields
 - Host more events in public spaces, like library, to help people connect
 - Schools should help participate in restructuring of public places
- CStructured community service programs through school – HIV/AIDS Walk
- Private and public legacy projects – something to leave your community after you graduate
- Community, action, service through IB program
 - More than one month

Group # 5

Are you able to find arts and culture in your community?

- Apollo Theater – rap/music
- Not really outside of El Puente. There are galleries, people taking notes, feel excluded. How would I get a painting in there?
- Not really, I see paintings when I walk to school. Put everyone’s work up.
- Everything I find in culture is based in El Puente: helps me to find.
- At school, we are encouraged to represent ourselves and reinforced with school trips – Carnegie Hall, Juilliard. Encourage us to see art.
- Not many events outside El Puente: our voices are always heard here.
- I’d see a new museum every week.

Are you able to find art classes and training?

Yes. I’m learning to play the xylophone in my community

Have dance and acting at El Puente, otherwise Wednesday art programs at school.

At school and El Puente: dance

I am able to find them, but I am not coordinated, so I don’t. Maybe cooking...writing?

How do you think the city should support arts and culture, especially for young people?

More programs

More opportunities

NoF, but we should encourage more at school

City should invest in more spaces for after school programs and classes for arts and activities/sports.

More free events, especially for students

More of these conversations to inform programs

REPORT BACKS

Group 9:

- More funding for materials to create art
- Arts program spaces need investment to expand programs and upgrade facilities

Group 8:

- More equitable distribution of funding
- Groups on the ground need more support
- Public space

Group 7:

- Having funding for more programs in school
- Not enough local programs
- More free after school programs

Group 6:

- Space and funding - If there isn't space and funding for it, how can we do anything?
 - More organized
 - Storage
 - Communal area
 - More money to pay staff
 - Ability to study it all

Group 5:

- Community involvement in spaces
- Change in community is hard.
- Both positive and negative – there needs to be more participation and inclusion.

Group 4:

- More outreach and information about arts programs
- Free arts programs with more access
- More public arts festivals
- “using art as a weapon”

Group 3:

- Need more open space – parks..

- More affordable space for artists (studios)
- Dance centers
- More community events and festivals
- No judgment

Group 2:

- Stereotypes don't allow people to be themselves
- Importance of cultural programs in schools. Make classes shorter to integrate more arts
- Technology to embrace creativity

Group 1:

- More safe havens in the five boroughs like El Puente
- Make arts programs more aware of community members
- More diversity in arts programs in schools and ability to take more than one type of class