

Brooklyn Folk Art Society
Feb 24, 2016, Brooklyn Arts Council

Katie – Horticulture Society Neighborhood Plaza Program
Shahid – National Youth Council of Pakistan
Don – In Concert Video
Salieu – South Bronx music performer, coro
Chris Mulé (host) – Brooklyn Arts Council Folklife
Asia – social practice artist in Greenpoint, integrating Polish immigrants
Patricia – Domestic Workers United, clinic in Urban Justice Center, immigration
Anush – poetry/writing classes
Beretha Reddy – Blues/Folk Music Festival in Ocean Hill
Yassir – Egyptian/Arabic dance
Omar – Yassir’s son
Nicole –
Maxine – Blue Mango LLC, Caribbean Arts Think Tank event on Sunday
Abra – Brooklyn Public Library Immigrant Public Services, interested in building cultural programming at the libraries
Aeilushi –

Issue Areas poster

Equity and Access priorities led a table conversation.

Rights

Muslim American rights related to cultural expression, within first and second generations. Disappointing example where, at a 4th of July Festival, they wouldn’t let Muslim Americans perform.

Space

Festivals

In the 1960s/70s, there was a requirement through planning boards that whenever you had a street fair, you had to supply one or more stages for local artists...for the community. In many cases Bronx Arts Council would intermediate these stages. Atlantic Antic has lost almost all of it...in favor of vendors. Encouraged multi-cultural and diverse artists.

Street Performers

Loss of street performers, less visible. Is it challenge in the health of the field or criminalization? Criminalization. And the corporatization of city streets that is influenced by real estate. Corporate entities like Starbucks don’t allow performances to congregate around spaces in front of local small businesses.

Free spaces

Whenever I do a music festival, I pay the artists...and I have to pay for practice and performance space! What is the resource for accessing free spaces? Sometimes, you have to be strategic. At BAM Café, you can trick a free performance space if your work aligns with their program. BRIC is not easy to access, which is off-putting. Venues like it, Roulette or even spaces in Parkchester, Bronx can be \$2K-\$5K a night!

Libraries – easy, informal access

I have a positive experience with access at Brooklyn Public Library in Greenpoint. They offer workshops, lectures, connect communities. **Emphasize importance of ease of access, informal spaces.**

Opposite experience at Flatbush library. There's a lack of understanding of the value of arts and culture. Level of understanding varies per branch. Citywide coordination, educate leadership to make the important argument. Thirst for tradition and connections. Community needs these things, particularly amid hardship.

Community library on Linden Blvd, we have meetings in the cultural room. But restrictive in when things must end based on library hours.

Community Spaces in all neighborhoods

Neighborhoods need community art spaces for practice/studio and presentation. Hubs for transmission, not just performance.

We have art spaces in our communities, but there's regulation to keep everything separate. No access to schools and constraints on libraries because of bureaucracy, liability and security. In Bay Ridge, there are schools, Salam church, recreation spaces, but require citywide coordination for availability.

The South Bronx used to have low cost or free community centers, but they've disappeared. And libraries are limited in hours and residential spaces confront trouble with neighbors and landlords (the sound of drums).

"cultural hubs," not just performance and events, but practice and teaching!

Old Town School of Folk Music in Chicago is an example of a great cultural hub.

In Egypt, there were cultural centers that focused on art performance, practice and learning. In Poland, art centers are also not so serious, easy to access like a library or school.

Is there a role for small businesses to function as community gathering spaces? Are cabaret laws still enforced, which could be inhibiting?

What are the best conditions for your work? There are small orgs that specifically focus on dance and require a certain kind of floor. For Caribbean pan music, they have to work in a specific (large) space. What else is going on in spaces when they're not programmed?

Neutral, Informal

What are neutral, informal spaces, compared to BAM? There's a demand for intimate spaces, but challenged with high demand. Spaces that people can feel at ease.

In Little Pakistan (Brooklyn), there's a Jewish guy who opens his home to different languages, performances, music, food because he loves the community. And traditionally, Pakistan doesn't have libraries. People come together in intimate spaces. It's for cultural community, not performance/display priorities.

Integrative Community Purposes

There are ethnic cultural spaces, but what about shared spaces? In the Irish community on Staten Island, there are some ethnic traditions that are contained/closed within their community, but others are open.

Churches have space, but church community and artists can confront restrictive barriers. Identifying what their cultural community is and potential language barriers. Inversely, do secular spaces restrict religious practices, like Voodoo?

In Bay Ridge, there are so many cultures and they all have their own space needs. Where's a space in the neighborhood that can accommodate multiple uses without restrictions? There are diverse art forms and a lack of shared spaces restrict our ability to share within and beyond our ethnic communities.

Neutral space, no restrictions, also open to different cultural practices.

Cultural hubs should bring together "American culture." i.e. exchange like at American Folk Festival in Maine.

Citywide Coordination: Liaisons/Ambassadors

Every community board should have a cultural committee or representative. Or something like CM Cornegy's Cultural Ambassador role. Shahid is on his local Community Board, allowing him connections to be an advocate for cultural activities in Little Pakistan.

My son asked, why can't you perform at this block party? Because I didn't know about it. Need a liaison for access to different options that we haven't considered among our multiple role as performers, marketers, etc..

Horticulture Society of New York manages a set of plaza management volunteers, but Katie sees value in getting in at the community level and networking between plaza managers and artists/cultural workers.

Economic and Social Impact

The Caribbean Carnival is a major financial boon for the city every year. How can that one event influence space to support places to practice throughout the year beyond the festival?

Vocation/training

Culture is often thought of at the academic level, but there are also opportunities for vocational training, like learning to sew, dancing. Children's access to different career choices. There's an opportunity to achieve skills, but no capacity to develop. Arts and culture should be woven/blend with vocation...but arts and vocation are separated in the US.

Business building

Some highly popular Palestinian dancers were renting a furniture store (because a cousin owned it) for practice. They wanted to start a business, but space got on the way. Small Business subsidy (citywide agency coordination) for a business building initiative so that it IS programmatic?

Health of the Field

Need support to just continue doing our work (like NYFA's \$7K grant) that's not tied to/conditioned by the program requirements of funders. Seed money, apprentice grants.