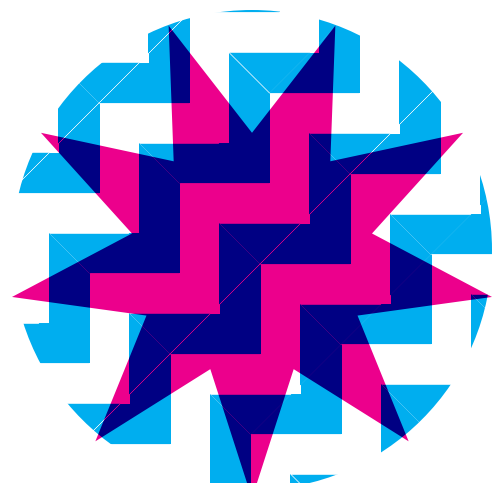
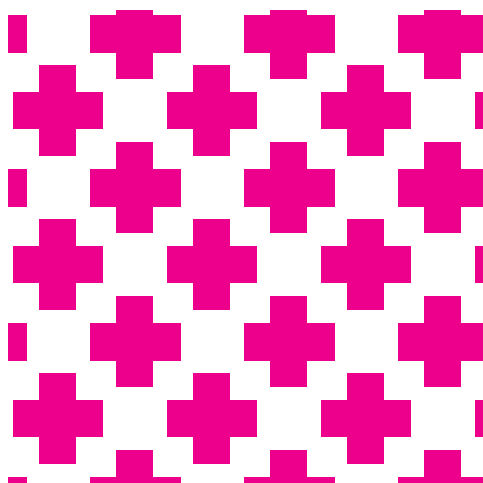
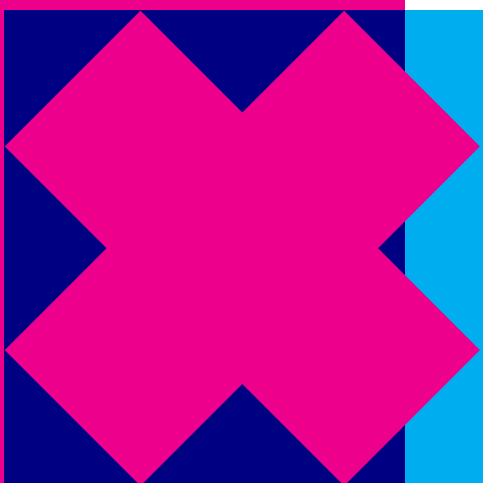
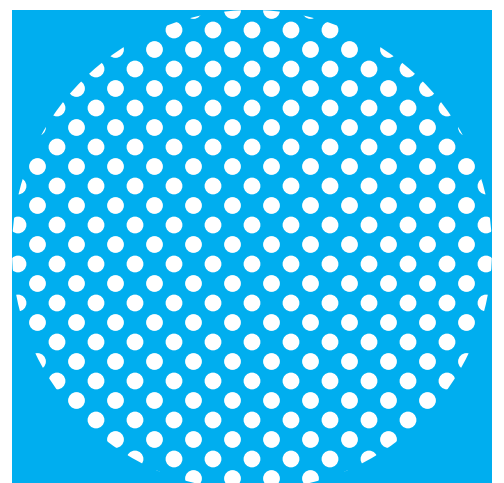
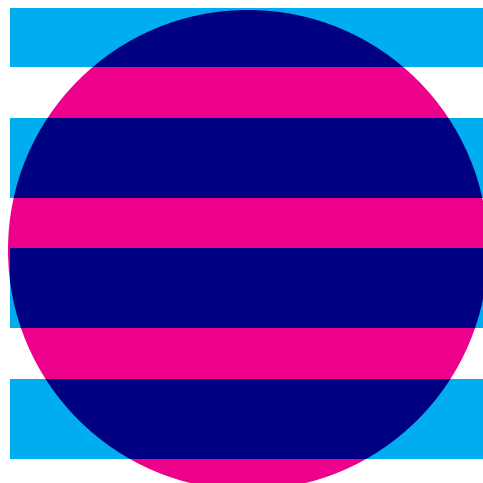
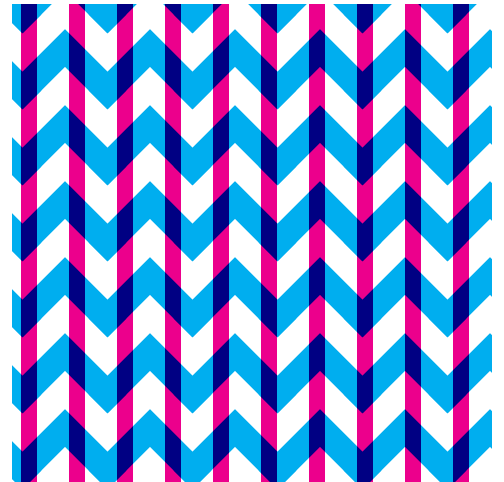
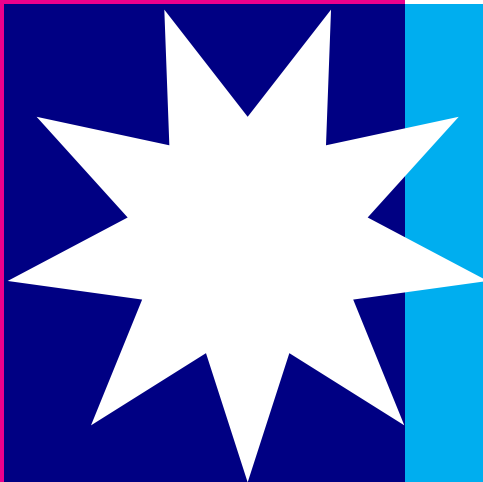


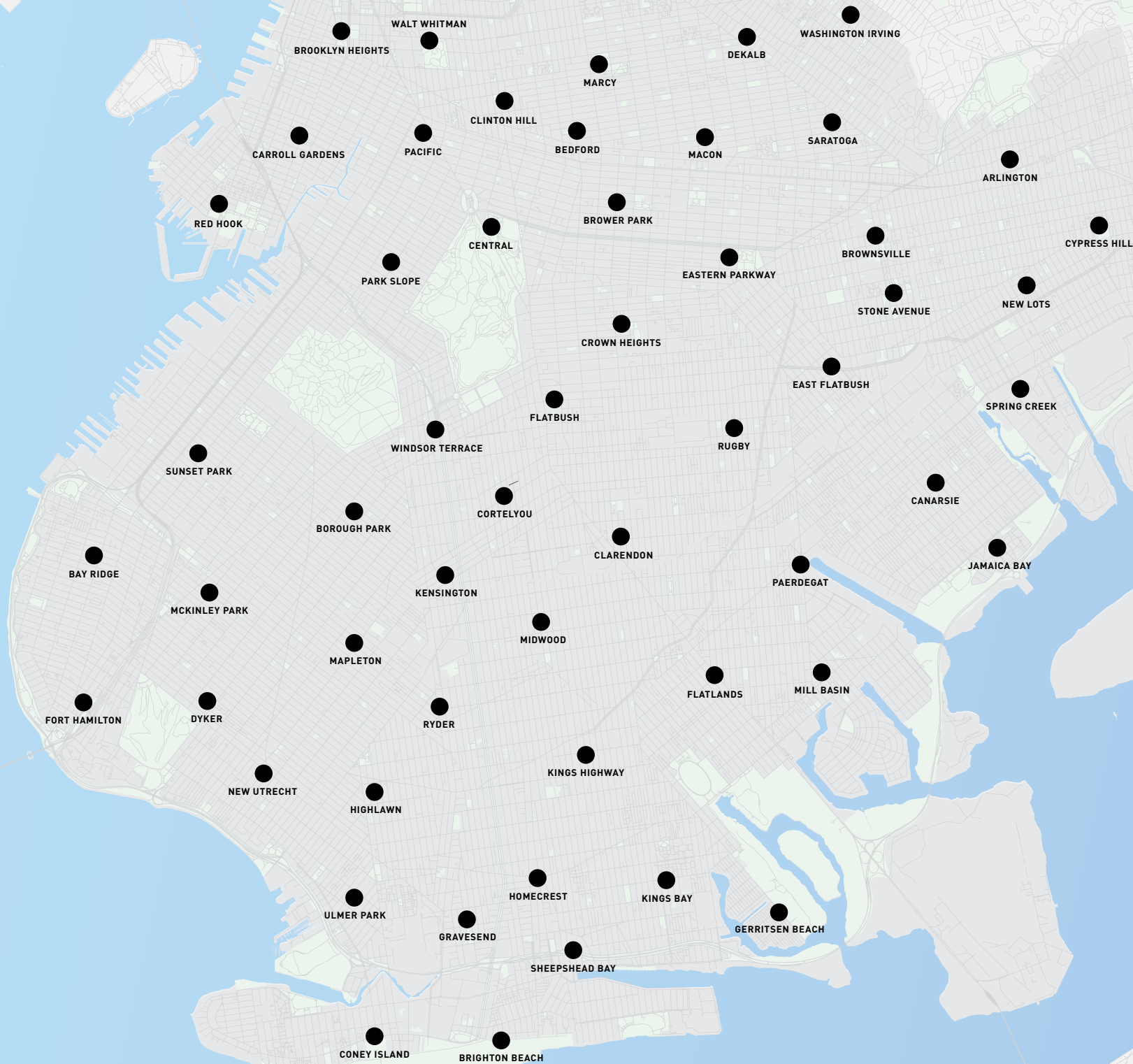
# OFF THE SHELF

A LOOK INSIDE BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY



SUMMER 2017

# BRANCH LOCATIONS



**BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY IS THE FIFTH-LARGEST** PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM IN THE UNITED STATES, SERVING THE BOROUGH'S 2.6 MILLION RESIDENTS AND OFFERING THOUSANDS OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS, MILLIONS OF BOOKS, FREE WIFI AND MORE THAN 1,500 INTERNET-ACCESSIBLE COMPUTERS.



# *THE DEMOCRACY ISSUE*

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# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



The founding of America's most democratic institution predates the founding of American democracy. When Benjamin Franklin and his associates formed the Library Company of Philadelphia in 1731, their aim was to establish a system in which patrons would "have each of us the advantage of using the books of all the other members, which would be nearly as beneficial as if each owned the whole." Though initially open only to subscribers, Franklin's library provided the inspiration for the publicly-funded free lending libraries that opened in American cities and towns throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

At the library, all people are free to read, consider and learn from various points of view. Civic engagement is encouraged, intellectual rigor is celebrated and controversial ideas are discussed in an open forum. The texts that constitute democracy's lifeblood are available for free to anyone with the inclination to consult them, and these texts take on new life for successive generations of readers.

Our conception of democracy is a public space—an agora—in which all people can expand their minds and pursue their dreams. In this issue of *Off the Shelf*, you will learn how immigrants turn to the library to gain a foothold in a new land; how poets have confronted politics in their work; and how library archivists are preserving the history of Brooklyn and making it accessible to all.

Libraries can satisfy their patrons' hunger for the truthful language and accurate information that are essential to democracy. This was evident in January, when Brooklyn Public Library launched a monthly discussion series on George Orwell's *1984* and every seat was quickly booked through October. As long as there are libraries and people who value them, language and democracy, inextricable as they are, will have their champions.

Very truly,

**Linda E. Johnson**  
President & CEO





Brooklyn Public Library's 60 branches are dynamic and versatile community centers that provide a sense of dignity and belonging to anyone who walks through our doors. Your support shows you recognize how integral our libraries are to their communities.

*Every gift counts—donate today at [bklynlib.org/Give-OTS](http://bklynlib.org/Give-OTS).*

# SUPPORT *the* BRANCHES





# IMMIGRANT WELCOME HERE!

*For new immigrants, BPL offers English conversation groups and classes, cultural programs for families, and collections in over 30 languages.*

Eva Raison, Coordinator of  
Immigrant Services

## FEATURE

Brooklyn has long been a haven for a diverse group of immigrants. Nearly 25% of Brooklynites were born outside of the U.S. Eva Raison, coordinator of immigrant services at BPL, works hard to ensure these communities have access to library services.

Thanks in part to startup funds from the Charles Revson Foundation, BPL developed its outreach services department in 2013 to do a better job including and providing services and programming for marginalized communities. “Although we’ve been providing services for immigrants the actual department is only three years old,” explained Eva.

### HOW CAN BPL’S IMMIGRANT SERVICES HELP YOU?

Eva heavily promotes BPL’s strong English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) offerings, which serve residents from over 120 countries. “Programs also serve immigrants at different stages,” she said. “We help new arrivals with limited English, and ‘old timers’ who’ve been here a while and speak English very well.” The immigrant services team is also responsible for establishing a New Americans Corner in each library, a section dedicated to making services and resources available to the people who need them.

“Our ongoing programs include free legal services in seven neighborhood libraries in Chinese, Kreyol, Spanish and Russian,” said Eva, “along with citizenship classes, access to forms and applications and multilingual family and older adult programming.”

Word of these services is shared throughout the community via word-of-mouth and community outreach efforts. “Libraries are heavily used by most immigrant communities already, because we’re seen as a safe, trusted space,” explained Eva.

For new immigrants, BPL offers English conversation groups and classes, cultural programs for families and collections in over 30 languages. “We’re an organization where people become integrated into the community, and contribute to the community,” said Eva. “But we’re also a civic institution where people can get more information on being active and informed citizens.”

Eva stressed that BPL staff is dedicated to celebrating individual cultures of the people who live in Brooklyn. “It’s important as a library to have the cultures of our communities represented,” she said, “so that our spaces are as diverse as the populations we serve.”

**[bklynlib.org/outreachservices](http://bklynlib.org/outreachservices)**

*Support for BPL’s Immigrant Services is provided by the New York State Education Department, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, New York State Library, NYC Business Assistance Corporation, Altman Foundation, Apple Bank, The Fund for New Americans in The New York Community Trust, NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York, The Fan Fox & Leslie R. Samuels Foundation and funds raised at BPL’s annual Gala.*



# PARK SLOPE LIBRARY HAS A NEW READING GARDEN

THERE'S NOTHING BETTER THAN ENJOYING A GOOD BOOK IN AN INSPIRING PLACE. AND JUST IN TIME FOR THE WARMER WEATHER, PARK SLOPE LIBRARY CUT THE RIBBON ON A BRAND NEW READING GARDEN.



a truly multi-generational space for our entire community,” said Friends of Park Slope Library Co-President Christopher Franceschelli, who began to envision the garden while walking his dog in the neighborhood. “It struck me what a wonderful opportunity the library’s outdoor space offered—and that the little hollow behind the back of the branch might make for the ideal location for a storytelling amphitheater,” he said. The Friends group, one of many throughout the system, is a group of volunteers who raise money and provide support for their local library branch.

Additional programs and uses proposed for the space include movement and yoga classes, stargazing sessions, quiet reading hours, and sensory and edible gardens—the possibilities are endless!

“I am excited to add this sure-to-be-loved space to our already-much-loved library,” said Council Member Brad Lander. “The Friends group came forward with this fantastic project, a group of volunteer budget delegates lent their support, and neighbors voted in the participatory budget process to make it a reality. I am ecstatic to see this project completed and full of families who voted to fund it.”

This summer, stop by Park Slope Library for your next great read and enjoy this dynamic new community space!

Thanks to a participatory budgeting proposal advocated by the Friends of Park Slope Library and with funding from Council Member Brad Lander, a reading garden became a reality on May 6, 2017: an outdoor space for programming, gardening and relaxation. “This garden is the result of a community vote during the participatory budgeting process two years ago,” said Stephanie Brueckel, the supervising librarian at the Park Slope branch. “It is truly the community's space.”

Construction on the garden began last summer, and features an amphitheater for storytimes and other productions, a trail of raised plant beds for STEM and gardening workshops, among other programs.

The garden was open in time for BPL’s big spring fundraiser, Bike the Branches, and the Jack and Friends Festival, hosted by Park Slope Library, in honor of Jack Roberts on June 17.

“It’s thrilling to see this project come to fruition, providing both a dedicated story garden for our children as well as





# POETS & POLITICS

The collections and poets selected here offer a plurality of vantage points when considering poetry and politics. Some poets offer a subjective experience, an inner response made public. Others situate themselves around a specific event or moment in time as a means to respond to a specific crisis. These collections disrupt dominant narratives in order to add to our imperfect world—to build something unlike but stemming from a present reality.



**BOOKMATCH LIBRARIAN SPOTLIGHT**  
**KALLIOPI MATHIOS** / OUTREACH LIBRARIAN  
CENTRAL LIBRARY

Kalliopi Mathios is an outreach librarian based at Central Library, occasional book reviewer, part-time poet and art lover. She likes cooking for friends, watching trashy TV and reading everything from philosophy to horror novels.



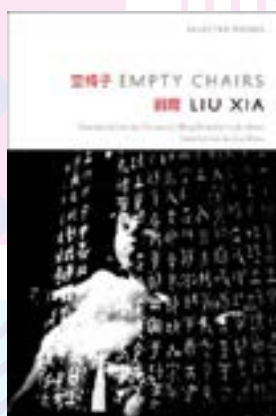
***There Are More Beautiful Things Than Beyoncé***  
by Morgan Parker



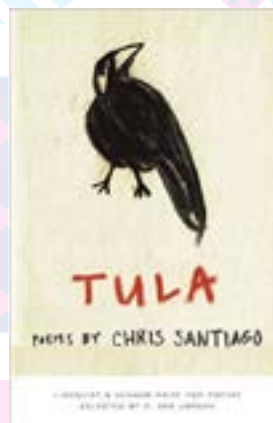
***Steal It Back***  
by Sandra Simonds



***Before the Next Bomb Drops: Rising Up from Brooklyn to Palestine***  
by Remi Kanazi



***Empty Chairs: Selected Poems***  
by Liu Xia



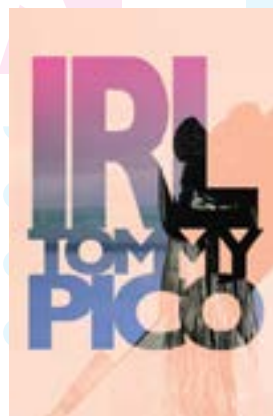
***Tula: Poems***  
by Chris Santiago



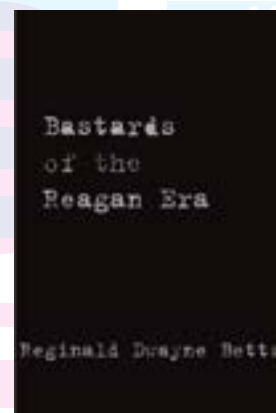
***Spill: Scenes of Black Feminist Fugitivity***  
by Alexis Pauline Gumbs



***Look: Poems***  
by Solmaz Sharif



***IRL***  
by Tommy Pico



***Bastards of the Reagan Era***  
by Reginald Dwayne Betts



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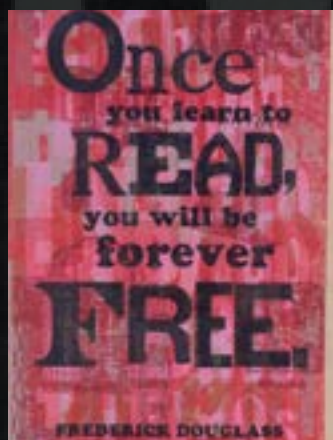
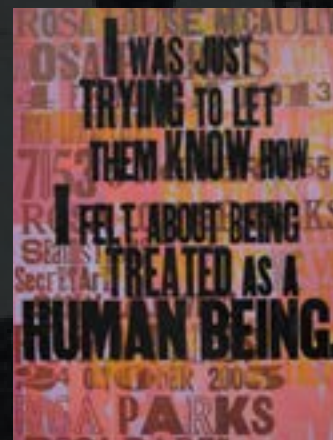
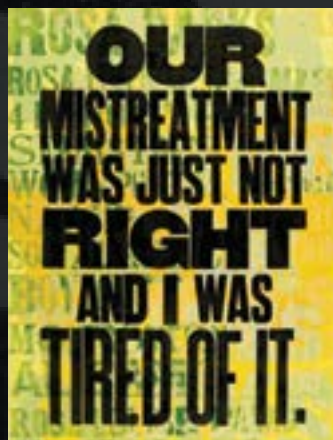
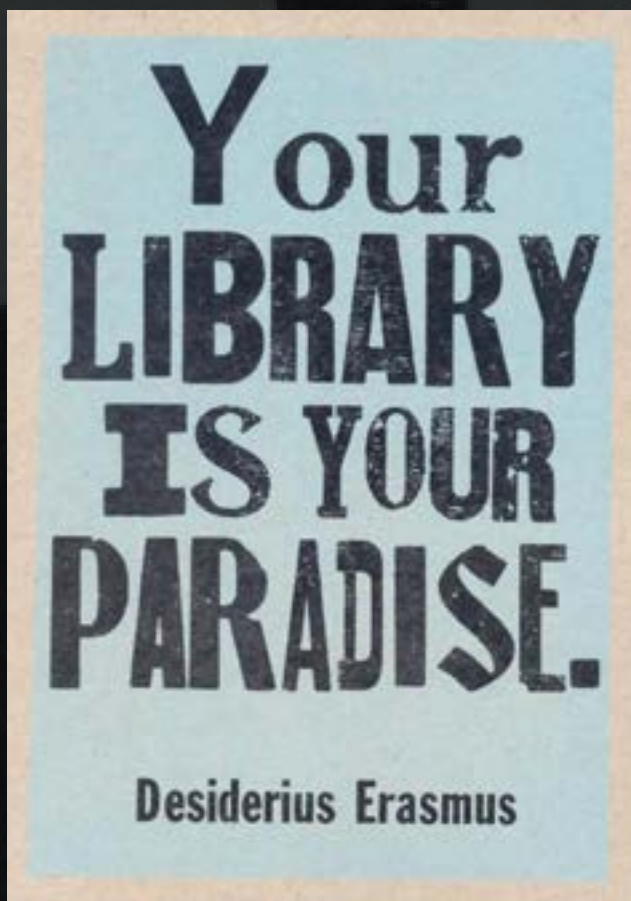
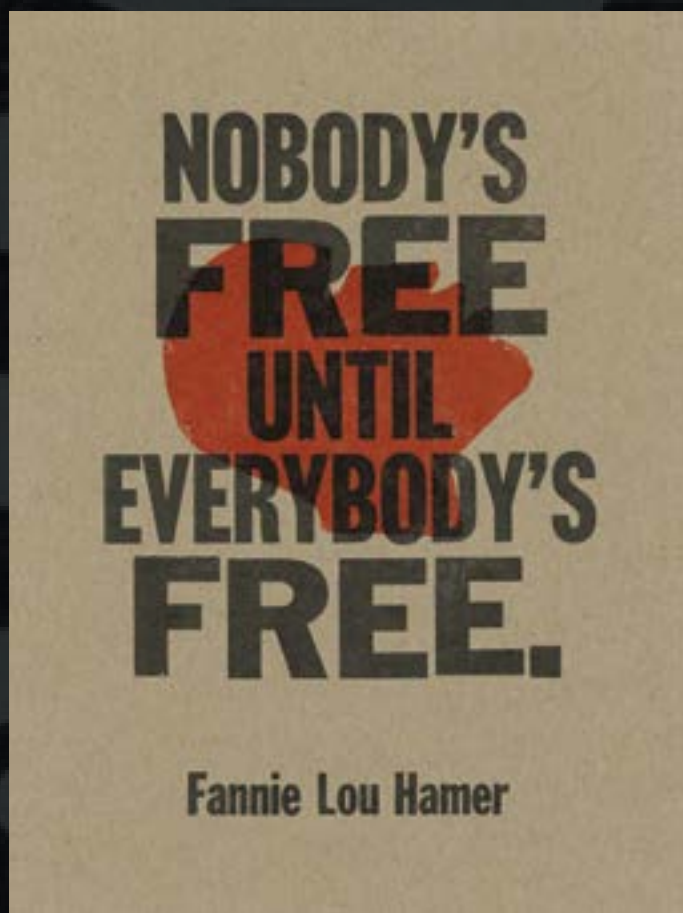
**Amos Paul Kennedy, Jr.**, describes himself as a “humble Negro printer.” Letterpress posters are Kennedy’s primary medium, and he often uses them as a means to distribute messages and aphorisms related to social justice issues, especially the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement.

“My work embodies my passion for stirring up strong emotions and encouraging people to think in previously unexplored ways.”

In the poster series ***Quotations of Rosa Louise Parks***, Kennedy isolated statements by Parks that reflect her motivations and sensibility as a pioneer in the Civil Rights Movement. His ***Puttin’ on the Ink*** exhibition featured famous literary quotes printed as postcards about libraries, reading, books and literacy.



On display at Central Library, Spring 2017





READ WITH US  
THIS SUMMER!

2017 SUMMER READING

# BUILD A BETTER WORLD



Illustration by Matthew Sporzynski

[bklynlib.org/summer](http://bklynlib.org/summer)

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Support for Brooklyn Public Library's Summer Reading 2017 program is provided by the National Grid Foundation, Astoria Bank, Con Edison, Williams and Macy's. Additional support is provided by The New York Community Trust ELSAM Fund. CBS2/WLNY is the official media partner for Summer Reading 2017.





George  
Orwell  
Nineteen  
Eighty-Four

WAR IS  
PEACE  
FREEDOM IS  
SLAVERY  
IGNORANCE IS

GEORGE ORWELL 1984

1984/48

BPL'S BRAVE  
NEW BOOK CLUB

GEORGE ORWELL



1984



PENGUIN  
BOOKS

NINETEEN  
EIGHTY-FOUR

GEORGE ORWELL

GEORGE ORWELL

1984

EIN UTOPISCHER ROMAN





#### PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

In the weeks following the 2016 election, librarians and booksellers across the country noticed an increased demand for a specific book: George Orwell's *1984*. Originally published in 1949, the dystopian novel about mass manipulation and government surveillance skyrocketed to the number one spot on bestseller lists immediately after the presidential inauguration, and it is still topping the charts today.

In response, Brooklyn Public Library launched a book discussion series called 1984/48 that taps into Brooklynites' newfound fascination with all things Orwellian. For 48 months, the Library is hosting a series of month-long book discussion groups focused on *1984*. Each group is limited to 15–20 participants and is led by a librarian, educator, writer or artist.

1984/48 is the brainchild of Nick Higgins, BPL's director of outreach services and one of *Library Journal's* 2017 Movers & Shakers. "Part of what makes the library unique and appreciated is that we regularly carve out spaces for people to come together to discuss the merits or dangers of particular ideas. It's what librarians do well, and I was inspired to focus on this aspect of librarianship."

According to Nick, *1984* has always been a great book club pick, but it's an ideal reading choice right now. "*1984* enjoys a nearly ubiquitous place in our public consciousness—even for those who have never read a word of it—and it's a book that's always relevant, no matter the political leadership in power," he explained. "And not insignificantly, '48' as the number of consecutive monthly

discussions is a neat inversion of '84' that I think Orwell would appreciate."

The series kicked off in January to overwhelming interest—shortly after registration opened, the monthly groups filled up through the end of the year and additional groups were created to meet the demand. At a 1984/48 meeting earlier this winter, 15 readers of various ages and backgrounds gathered at Central Library to talk about everything from America's class system to the term 'alternative facts,' and whether the widespread adoption of emojis has limited or expanded human beings' communication. They also discussed *1984*, of course, and had a spirited conversation comparing themes from the book to current events.

Janelle Greco, a program manager at LaGuardia Community College and the evening's discussion leader, was not surprised by the group's enthusiasm.

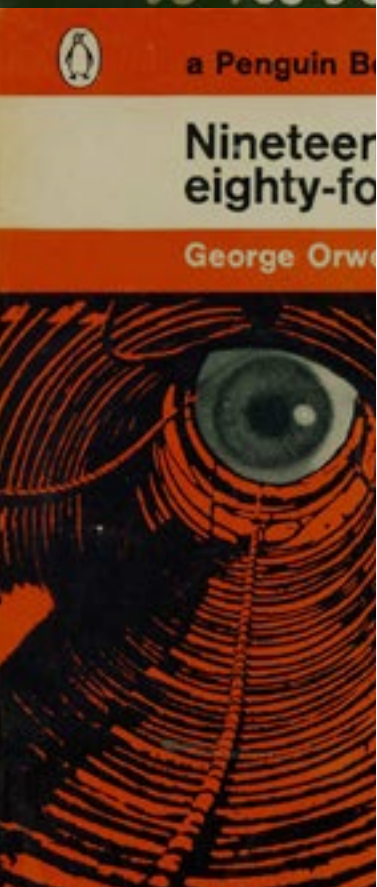
*"Themes that are surfacing in the news—freedom of the press, authenticity, totalitarianism—are at the forefront of Orwell's novel, and there are some eerie parallels. 1984 lets us approach these issues together and create a comforting community."*

"When you explore what's happening around you with the people in your area, it helps you realize you're part of something bigger and can make an impact. If there is hope, it certainly does lie in the proles, as Orwell would have said."

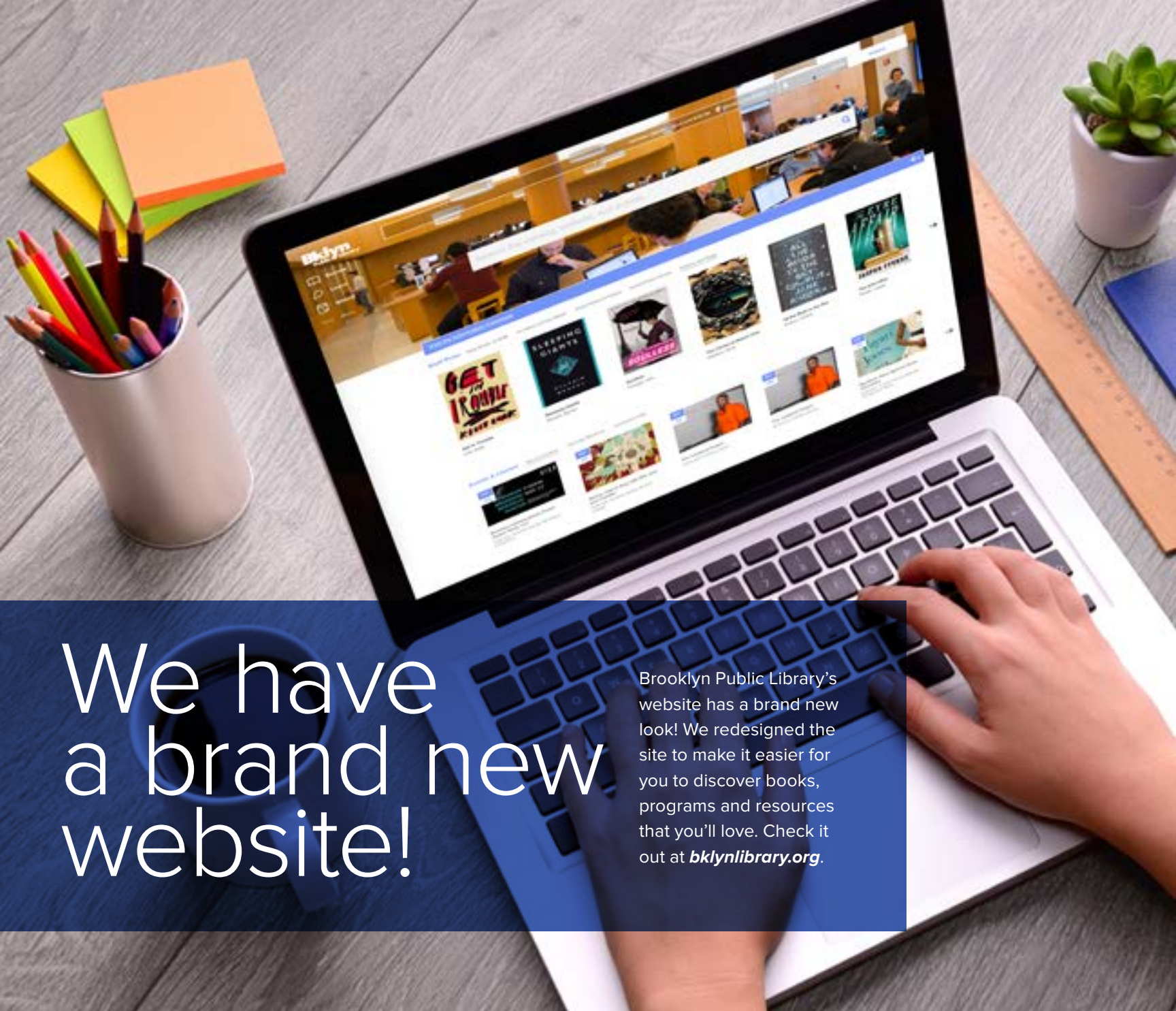
Although the discussions cover serious topics, there is plenty of joy that comes from bonding over a good book. "What stands out for me is just the general excitement people have for gathering around a piece of literature," Janelle said. "As a reader and writer, I often feel that society doesn't appreciate the arts enough or there's a misunderstanding regarding the societal function the arts serve; the 1984/48 group reminded me that people need literature and the library, particularly in times like these."

The 1984/48 book discussion series will run through 2020 and is open to everyone. It's also activating a whole new group of library users. In the words of one 1984/48 participant, "I love Brooklyn Public Library. I just discovered it and now they can't get rid of me."

View the 1984/48 schedule at [bklynlib.org/1984](http://bklynlib.org/1984).







# We have a brand new website!

Brooklyn Public Library's website has a brand new look! We redesigned the site to make it easier for you to discover books, programs and resources that you'll love. Check it out at [bklynlibrary.org](http://bklynlibrary.org).



# THANK YOU!

Thank you to the hundreds of dedicated cyclists and library lovers who celebrated Bike the Branches 2017 in support of Brooklyn's neighborhood libraries.

A special thank you to our sponsors and partners, including Con Edison, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Brompton Bicycle, Zipcar, Citi Bike, New York City Department of Transportation, Bike New York, Gothamist, Smorgasburg, Sixpoint Brewery, Colson Patisserie, Essentia, Grainger, Prospect Park Alliance, Ride Brooklyn, RydeSafe and Redbeard Bikes.







# BUSHWICK LIBRARY UNVEILS A TECHNOLOGY LEARNING LAB

**A new education and technology center is bringing computer classes and multilingual programming to Bushwick Library. BPL and Charter Communications, Inc. teamed up to open the Spectrum Learning Lab, which provides state-of-the-art technology, including laptop computers and high-speed internet service, to patrons free of charge. Many of the lab's digital literacy programs and classes are offered in multiple languages to serve Bushwick residents who have limited English proficiency.**

With 1,500 public computers, free laptop and tablet lending, and a robust schedule of public programs and courses, Brooklyn Public Library is one of the borough's largest providers of free technology.

"The library's doors are open to all people, and the Learning Lab will help patrons develop useful skills no matter what language they speak or how proficient they currently are with technology," said Brooklyn Public Library President and CEO Linda E. Johnson. "The lab is a valuable resource to the entire neighborhood, particularly job seekers, students and non-native English speakers."

While broadband service is widely available in Brooklyn, broadband adoption, particularly among immigrant communities and lower-income households, is far from universal. According to the 2013 American Community Survey, approximately one-third of Bushwick's households lack broadband service at home, and many rely on the library for computer and internet access.

"Our patrons are really enjoying the lab, especially the kids and teenagers. Until now, we haven't been able to provide enough computers for them to use for an extended period of time," explained Marc Waldron, Bushwick's neighborhood library supervisor. "Now, instead of being interrupted, they have the time and space to finish their schoolwork."

***"I THINK WHAT EVERYONE APPRECIATES THE MOST ABOUT THE LEARNING LAB IS HAVING THAT DEDICATED, INDIVIDUAL SPACE."***

Charter's commitment to the Bushwick Learning Lab includes Spectrum Internet™ and TV services, computer equipment and software, flat-screen HDTVs and other furnishings. The Spectrum Learning Lab at Bushwick Library offers a rotating schedule of programs, approximately three per day, including twice-weekly programs for older adults, weekly job readiness workshops, and a varied schedule of after-school programs and class visits by local schools. Staff, volunteers and community partners host technology classes, digital literacy workshops, STEM programs and open labs for independent work.

Beginning computer users benefit from classes that teach basic skills, while Teen Tech Time attendees learn coding and design skills. Career information librarians offer weekly programs and mentoring sessions for job seekers. Twenty laptop computers, provided by Charter, are available for in-library loans—twice as many as were available at the branch previously.

When not reserved for BPL programs and workshops, the lab can be used by local schools and community groups in need of technology resources.



**Nestled in the back workroom of the Brooklyn Collection, BPL's archival department, manager of special collections Natiba Guy-Clement sits with her team, tasked with organizing and cataloging Brooklyn's history.** Natiba comes to BPL via the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, which gave her the first taste of the importance of archival work. "In many ways, I grew up there," Natiba said of the Schomburg Center. "My experience there increased my interest in library work."

And libraries have always played a big part in Natiba's life. As a young girl in a small town in Trinidad, she remembers visiting the library as part of her normal routine. "I would spend every day after school at my local library," said Natiba. "The idea of all these books that shed light on such a bigger part of the world than the little corner you occupy enticed me." She also benefited from a small but rich library of sorts at home—Natiba's grandmother kept shelves full of reading material on hand for her to devour. "I had already read *Things Fall Apart* by the time I was 12, because that's what was in my grandmother's house."

Natiba found her way to BPL after seeing the job listing by chance. "It was a complete fluke. I wasn't looking to change jobs," said Natiba, who'd been at the Schomburg since turning 18. The opportunity seemed more attractive for the new Brooklyn resident, who'd moved to her new home from Harlem after getting married. "I saw the posting and thought it could be a dream job—close to home and with interesting material. And everyone was so nice; it's very communal here!"

Her first order of business? "I want people to know that Brooklyn Collection exists, and not be a silo at Central Library," she explained. Natiba hopes that Brooklynites will come to know the Collection as a resource for Brooklyn history, and that they are welcome to bring in ephemera that could help document the story of this ever-changing borough. "We want to document their Brooklyn history for future generations."

Brooklyn Collection is happy to welcome her; stop in to explore the Collection on the second floor at Central Library, and say hello!





# PLANNING YOUR LEGACY

*Give the Gift of Discovery & Learning*

*My legacy gift is my way of acknowledging the role Brooklyn Public Library played in my life and supporting its essential role in the Brooklyn community.*

Paula Silver, Member of the Ingersoll Circle

Remembering Brooklyn Public Library as a beneficiary in your will, trust or retirement plan ensures your legacy while providing for the Library's future.

To learn more about including Brooklyn Public Library in your estate plan and becoming a member of the Ingersoll Circle, the Library's planned giving society, please contact us at **718.230.2719** or [givinginfo@bklynlibrary.org](mailto:givinginfo@bklynlibrary.org).



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# Bklyn Public Library

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Brooklyn, NY 11238

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Fiscal Year 2016-17