Event Title: Station to Station: Telling the Stories of QUEENSBOUND

Event Description: Hear from Queens poets about poetry as an act of resistance and how to build and fortify a literary community in the midst of the Trump era. The poets of QUEENSBOUND—an online audio project launched in 2018 that collects, records, and shares the stories of Queens—will read work and discuss how, using the Queens subway lines, the project maps out and celebrates the literary community in Queens and, through poetry and narrative, reflects one of the world’s most diverse places back on itself.

Participants: Jared Harél is the author of Go Because I Love You and The Body Double. He’s been awarded the Stanley Kunitz Memorial Prize from American Poetry Review and the William Matthews Poetry Prize from Asheville Poetry Review. Safia Jama is a Cave Canem fellow and a Harvard graduate. Formerly the nonfiction editor of Apogee Journal, she has published poetry in Ploughshares, Rhino, Cagibi, Spoken Black Girl, and No Dear. Her poetry has also been featured on WNYC’s Morning Edition and CUNY TV’s Shades of U.S. series. Joseph O. Legaspi is the author of the collections Threshold and Imago, and the chapbooks Postcards, Aviary, Bestiary, and Subways. Recent works appeared in Poetry, New England Review, World Literature Today, and Best of the Net. A former Fulbright fellow, he cofounded Kundiman. Abeer Y. Hoque is a Nigerian-born Bangladeshi American writer and photographer. She has published a monograph of travel photographs and poems (The Long Way Home), a book of linked stories, poems, and photographs (The Lovers and the Leavers), and a memoir (Olive Witch).

Moderator: KC Trommer is the author of the debut poetry collection We Call Them Beautiful and the chapbook The Hasp Tongue. She is the founder of the audio project QUEENSBOUND and is the assistant director of communications at NYU Gallatin.

Event Category: Poetry, Community Projects
Event Organizer: KC Trommer, founder, QUEENSBOUND
Event Moderator: KC Trommer

INTRODUCTIONS
KC Trommer introduces panelists (ed board members Abeer Y. Hoque, Joseph O. Legaspi, Jared Harél, and 2018 contributor Safia Jama) and does overview of the project. Their bios are listed on the handouts that are circulating. Please send questions forward for the Q&A at the end. We have a sign up sheet up front for those who want updates or write to us at queensboundproject@gmail.com.

QUEENSBOUND is a collaborative audio project begun in 2018 that seeks to connect writers across the borough, showcase and develop the literature of Queens, and to reflect the borough back to itself. From Long Island City all the way to Jamaica, the poems of QUEENSBOUND map the neighborhoods and the vibrancy and diversity of the borough, embedding audio recordings from leading Queens poets and writers on a subway map, designed by Kyle Richard.
SHOW QUEENSBOUND MAP

On November 3, 2018, the project launched with a reading on the 7 line followed by a reception at the Queens Museum. Some of the leading writers and poets of Queens read original work on the 7 train, beginning at Vernon Blvd Jackson Av stop, before stepping off at Mets-Willets Point and heading over to The Queens Museum for a reception. The event concluded with a song which included lines from every poem in the launch composed by Adam DeGraff and Tyler Burba, hosts of the reading series Kith & Kin.

SHOW LAUNCH VIDEO

Our next edition will feature the work of 18 new contributors, and we will celebrate with another 7 train reading on Saturday, April 18, 2020, ending with a reception at Flushing Town Hall.

We are here today to talk about the project and its larger aims of connecting writers across the borough and showcasing and developing the literature of Queens, as well as why local literary projects like this one are important on a global scale.

CONNECTION

Each contributor was asked to share the names of other poets who might want to contribute to the project.

We share both the project and our process, in case QUEENSBOUND can be a model that other cities/towns can replicate. Please feel free to build on what we have learned.

Other reading series that have collaborated with QUEENSBOUND: #QueensWritersResist
Kith & Kin
Brooklyn Book Festival (in Queens)
Ongoing Poetry Salon

READINGS: 25 minutes

Each panelist will read 3-5 minutes of work, beginning left to right. Sample poems:

City of Queens
by Abeer Y. Hoque

Latinas with dark hair
pulled into ponytails
strong arms, legs pumping
fast, faster

yummy mummies taking over
the elliptical machines
under signs that say
but I have never been intimidated
in spaces filled with women
one less layer of danger
one less thing to think

our city is dotted with male statues
streets named after men
phallic buildings reaching
into the sky

What would it be like
one wonders
to walk through a city
named after women?

I can’t imagine that grace
but give me a Planet Fitness
in Jackson Heights
any day

All Possible Fates
By Jared Harél

The universe is expanding, but my apartment
is not. This is balance I tell myself,
tripping over trikes, toy blocks,
the way a housecat can convince itself a mattress
is wilderness, its very own Savannah,
or how no one in the neighborhood can afford
the neighborhood, though we ghost
past townhouses, pretending they are ours.
In the end, isn’t it in our nature to disperse?
To pull away? When my daughter begs to play
hide-and-seek, I try my best not to find her
immediately, though there are only so many places
to hide. Then one day, sick of ducking
behind sofa cushions, or under the desk, she slips
into the bathroom, snaps down the lock.
Three years old and well out of reach.
Before I knew I too could disappear, I would leap
off balconies, bunk beds and swings, bike
to the brink of each dead-end street.
I write this beside a man weeping into the Arts
& Leisure section of the Times. His lips
are quivering, face wet, yet what can I do but look
away? I look away, but he’s in this now,
fixed inside, like how my daughter was a door
I threatened and pleaded with, until she felt
like having pancakes, and turned the knob. I admit
all fault, to all possible fates. Are we bound
to be an airport where everyone leaves?

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN & SUNSET
By Safia Jama

This taxi smells like the tiny box of empanadas
warming my lap

Eastward is summer sky, a row of trees
before a row of tombstones

I recall how as a kid, I loved the black hearse best
Once, after I stole my first candy, I saw one make a wide turn
failing to notice the funeral home

I yearned to ride in that glamour reserved for the dead
so much better than the fake wooden wagons
that smelled of dogs and dogs’ cages.

Now a silver ribbon of river runs a barely visible silk
thread—Chrysler drips demure jewels as night declines

I still yearn for the black bustle, promise of whalebone,
silk bows, and men in tailored suits waiting to kiss
my hand

[ their spine ]
By Joseph O. Legaspi

Bless them on their predawn commute, sweat-stained caps, hands in rare repose.
The hardest working people of New York City. Blue collar, immigrants fortified with
make-ends-meet perseverance. Heads bobbing, eyes inward. In their shallow
dreaming echoes of metal wheels screeching against steel tracks. Shepherd them to
their desolate destinations: office buildings, assembly lines, stalls and depots. Rise,
bread of sustenance! Brew, reviving coffee! Soon, the workers will strike sparks,
feed the kiln of infrastructures. For now, lodged in plastic seats, they rest. Before
the hours stretch them into rubber, the years pound them into sand. Alleviate their
chronic aches. The marginalized with oily faces, the undocumented cloaked in
weariness. Praise the woman with my mother’s face lined with wretchedness and
dignity. Sanctify those who deliver the day, mounting the sun up to the sky with
invisible strength, heavy on the pull. Bless their bent knees, hearts murmuring hope,
and their spine.

7 to 46th Street/Bliss
by KC Trommer
When the train picks up speed, it sounds like a woman screaming, one woman all over the city, releasing her heat in a high, steady wail,

smearing her red mouth along the tunnel walls. I make and unmake myself. When the doors open, anyone can come in, anyone does. I circle back
downtown, leave the book open on my lap, look over the map that lays out the routes. The city is a muscle; we feed it. The woman across
from me shrivels up her face, sticks a finger in each ear to kill the sound of the train rounding into Queensboro Plaza. My hands are warm
on my lap: they are for making and unmaking. I thumb the seam of the sketchbook open while the city sits and waits, indifferent and unblinking

like all gods. My mouth is a siren, my body mine to make. Wherever I go, I am this woman. Whoever needs erasing, I erase.

DISCUSSION - 20 minutes

How does connecting with other writers and artists improve one’s writing? How has QUEENSBOUND helped those of us here to find each other and build our community in Queens?

Following up on that, how has building this particular community helped our writing, whether through the craft of writing or through having the support we have of each other, or for a subject matter.

QUEENSBOUND exists not only for the writers but also for the listeners and the readers to showcase writing that speaks to a particular place at a particular time. How do you write about place? How do you write about a place in a way that doesn’t try to be definitive about it? And why do it? Why write place?

What advice do we as writers and organizers have to give about the experience of starting and expanding this project? What have the challenges and rewards been?

How is community building an act of resistance?

Why QUEENSBOUND and why now?

Does this kind of project translate to non-urban spaces? What suggestions do we have for writers looking to connect with each other outside of the obvious places and contexts?

Can we all reflect on the relationships that we have made since 2018, some of which can be traced back to QUEENSBOUND or QUEENSBOUND-related things?
QUEENSBOUND is primarily an audio project, but the train reading got a lot of play because it was poetry for the people in a public space. It had a flash mob quality. But the thinking was also that people could go to the site and listen to the poems on their own. So it was both a big, flashy to do and an offering for solo, introspective listening. We wanted to bring poetry into better conversation with the public and to offer a performative showcase—it also solved the problem of one reader after another going up to a stage and reading one poem. It added dynamism. We’ll talk about how the train reading itself worked and what it felt like, especially as we’re about to have another one. And we’ll talk about the dreaded Poet Voice.

**Q&A - 20 minutes**

We’ll take audience questions that I have been written down or questions from audience members who want to ask us directly.

**THANKS & CONNECT**

Thank you all for attending. Please follow QUEENSBOUND on IG at @_queensbound_ on Twitter with #QUEENSBOUND and write to us at queensboundproject@gmail.com.

Our new website will launch in April 2020. In honor of 2020 National Poetry Month, our next train reading will feature new contributors on 4/18, starting at the Queens-bound Vernon Jackson 7 train stop at 4 pm and ending with a reception at Flushing Town Hall. See you on the 7!