

## Brooklyn Public Library Presents Week-long ‘Democracy Lab’ In 100+ Person Outdoor Inflatable Dome at Grand Army Plaza

### Featuring Workshops and Talks on Social Justice and Civic Engagement with *The Simpsons* Writer Mike Reiss, *New Yorker* Writer Rachel Aviv, and More

From Monday, June 11, to Sunday, June 17, 10am – 10pm Daily

**BROOKLYN, May 24, 2018**—Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is partnering with raumlaborberlin, Prospect Park Alliance, Storefront for Art & Architecture, and visitBerlin to present **Democracy Lab**, a week of workshops, conversations, and music providing new perspectives on utopia, democracy, and civic engagement in SPACEBUSTER, an **inflatable dome at Grand Army Plaza’s** iconic Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Arch. From **June 11–17, 2018**, BPL’s Democracy Lab will convene the Brooklyn and greater New York community for programs ranging from conversations with ***New Yorker* writer Rachel Aviv** on isolation; **National Book Award nominee Francine Prose** on vital classic novels; and a special edition of Visually Speaking, a series of conversations with photographers, with New York **LGBTQ+ community activist and photographer Lola Flash**, to **chair-making workshop for all ages** and an interactive demonstration on **green design** with raumlaborberlin.

Bringing together architects, urban planners, writers, artists, and, most crucially, citizens, Brooklyn Public Library provides a space for citizens to step out of the daily deluge of news and information and into its Democracy Lab—an inflatable semitransparent bubble hosting up to 120 people at a time—to consider the most important questions of contemporary American public life. From the use of public space to exploring alternatives to the court system, Democracy Lab invites engaged citizens to reimagine America.

“Libraries have long been a critical resource for democracy, and Brooklyn Public Library is delighted to welcome members of the community to this unique civic space in the heart of Brooklyn,” said **Linda E. Johnson, BPL President and CEO**. “Democracy Lab is a place to consider contemporary political and social issues through the lenses of literature, history, music, art, and satire.”

**Laszlo Jakab Orsos, BPL’s Vice President of Arts and Culture** added, “Solutions to the complex problems facing our society today require imagination, and we at BPL are thrilled through this partnership to provide a dedicated space for critical thinking on these vital issues in Democracy Lab.”

Taking place from **10:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m. daily** from **June 11–17, 2018**, highlights of the daily Democracy Lab program include:

- *Morning* – Guided readings of *The New York Times* led by artists, community leaders, and writers, including *New York Times* archivist Jeff Roth.

- *Midday* – A Brown Bag Lunch Concert series made up of some of the finest musicians in Brooklyn and from around the world, including kora player **Salieu Suso** and harpist **Brandee Younger**, followed by discussions examining contemporary social issues and modern design.
- *Afternoon* – **Guided walking tours** of Brooklyn sights and natural habitats, as well as how-to **workshops for all ages** on lock picking, chair making, and acrobatics.
- *Evening* – A series of literary variety shows, book debates with novelist Francine Prose; panels, including conversations with *The Simpsons* writer **Mike Reiss**, speaking to his 30 years ranking American politics with prime-time satire; a discussion on the intersection of sexuality and spirituality led by psychoanalyst **Jamieson Webster** with comedians **Mike Albo** and **Ophira Eisenberg**, host of NPR's *Ask Me Another*; and a conversation between curator **Jonathan Square** and photographer **Lola Flash**, considering the artist's work documenting social, LGBTQ+ and feminist issues, as part of the Visually Speaking series curated by Terrence Jennings.

Democracy Lab also features a **Prospect Park Alliance** forum on creating a community-driven vision for Brooklyn's green spaces (Saturday 6/16, 2:00–3:00 p.m.); an interactive **Green Design Lab** featuring a virtual reality tour by Marble Fairbanks Architects of the Greenpoint Library currently under construction (Saturday 6/16, 5:00–6:30 p.m.); and a multi-artist presentation from *Dear America*, a national platform for artists of all genres to express their views of America, including *New Yorker* writer **Rachel Aviv** and teenage activist **Mosab Hamid** (Monday 6/11, 7:30-9:00 p.m.). SPACEBUSTER will also host a closed-door mediation with the **Red Hook Community Justice Center's Peacemaking Program**, where family members and friends of recent victims of police shootings discuss the issue with affected and concerned members of the community. Mohican facilitator David Rash, and other facilitators from the Justice Center, will lead.

The SPACEBUSTER, an inflatable bubble in which Democracy Lab takes place, was developed by raumlaborberlin, a collective of eight Berlin-based architects who work at the intersection of architecture, city planning, art, and urban intervention, and is presented in partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance, Storefront for Art & Architecture, and visitBerlin. Generous support for Democracy Lab at Brooklyn Public Library is provided by Windham-Campbell and Whole Foods Market.

View the schedule and RSVP for Democracy Lab events at this link:

<https://www.bklynlibrary.org/democracylab>

### **About Brooklyn Public Library (BPL)**

Brooklyn Public Library is the nation's sixth-largest library system and among the borough's most democratic civic institutions. We offer 65,000 free programs a year for people from all walks of life—immigrants learning a new language, students preparing for college, older adults seeking companionship, aspiring entrepreneurs launching their dreams, children discovering the world, and people of all ages exploring arts and culture. And we provide patrons 3.9 million opportunities to enjoy one of life's greatest satisfactions: the discovery of a good book.

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