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JACKSON HEIGHTS & ELMHURST Arts & Entertainment

Queens Love to Be Celebrated at Storytelling Event



By Katie Honan | July 14, 2014 4:32pm | Updated on July 14, 2014 8:06pm @katie_honan



ELMHURST — Tired of her home borough being the punch line to jokes, Queens native Bridget Bartolini set out to inspire pride.



"Queens Documented" will kick off July 20 and aims to celebrat... View Full Caption Five Boro Story Project

She teamed up with The Laundromat Project, which aims to strengthen communities through creativity, and Gurpal Singh of SEVA, a community-based group from Richmond Hill, to create Queens Documented.

The initiative focuses on the immigrant experience in Jackson Heights and Elmhurst. It kicks off July 20 at Terraza 7 at 40-19 Gleane St. in Elmhurst.

Bartolini, 31, grew up in South Richmond Hill and last year started a similar program, Five Boro Story Project, as a way for residents in marginalized neighborhoods to tell their own stories — holding events in places including Stapleton, Gowanus and Jamaica.

"It was really in part born out of my frustrations over the lack of cultural resources in Queens," she said, as well as frustration over the negative stereotypes surrounding the boroughs that aren't Manhattan.

"So many of us in the outer boroughs, we get a hard time. People will come to New York from Iowa and say 'You're from Queens, you're not a real New Yorker,'" she said.

"They live in Manhattan so they think that they are more of a New Yorker than those who grew up here."

Bartolini, who now lives in Bed-Stuy but is eyeing a return to Queens, hopes "Queens Documented" will celebrate her home borough and connect some of its residents.

She and co-organizer Singh, another Richmond Hill native, believe "the act of sharing stories in an intimate environment leads to genuine and long-lasting connections within a community," she said.

It'll be the first in a quarterly series with the next one held in October at Terraza 7, a place they chose not only for its intimate location but for owner Freddy Castiblanco's work within the community.

Bartolini hopes "that a lot of people are going to come out and listen to people's stories and start reminiscing and become inspired to share their own stories," she said.

"Listening to people's stories naturally make us reflect on our own stories. I hope strangers will become neighbors."

The kickoff event for Queens Documented is Sunday, July 20 at 6pm at Terraza 7, 40-19 Gleane Street, Elmhurst.



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