

**Ambiguous Borders:
Exploring Definitions of Community in Red Hook,
Brooklyn**

An Audio Walking Tour

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Introduction

Hello! Welcome to Red Hook, a neighborhood rich with history and culture and always sort of on the edge of things. My name is Shannon Geis and I will be leading you through a walk around the neighborhood, introducing you to many interesting Red Hook residents and business owners along the way.

This project is a product of my Oral History Master's Thesis through Columbia University. Over my course of study, I spent months researching the history of the neighborhood, reading old newspapers, and, most importantly, speaking with the people of Red Hook about how they view the community and where they see themselves in it. You will get to meet many of the people that I have talked to as we walk through the neighborhood.

I hope that through this walk, you will get a better sense of the diverse meanings that Red Hook has taken on for both the people who live here and those outside the community looking in.

In October 2012, Hurricane Sandy hit New York. Red Hook, surrounded on three sides by water, had record levels of flooding, which damaged many homes and businesses. Like many other hard-hit neighborhoods, Red Hook had to figure out how to come back.

This disaster also meant that many of the residents and business owners in the neighborhood had to figure out how the storm affected their perceptions of

community identity and even their personal identity. Today, we'll discover what some of them found.

Just a few other quick things before we get started. First, this walking tour tries to capture a particular moment in Red Hook, but things change quickly. Some of the things we talk about today or go to see might look a little different than how they are described in the tour. In an ever-changing city like New York, this is inevitable.

Second, there are lots of interesting places to visit and people to talk with along this tour. Feel free to pause the recording at any time to engage more directly with the people and places we are visiting. In fact, I encourage you to stop to talk to people you meet along the way. There will be moments in the tour where I will try to make it easier for you to stop. That said, you don't have to stop at all if you don't want to and, depending on the day and the time of year, there may be places that you can't visit today.

Red Hook Pool

Our starting spot is at the Red Hook Recreation Center and Pool on Bay Street between Henry and Clinton streets. If this is not where you are, pause the recording and restart once you get there. If you are here at the Recreation Center, there are public restrooms inside that you may use. We are going to be here for a few minutes so feel free to sit down on the steps in front of the building.

You should be looking south past Bay Street towards the park. Where the park is now, was once the waterfront, that's why this street is named Bay Street. It

was eventually filled in with the land you see now. Where we are sitting, was once the site of one of the largest Hoovervilles in New York City during the Great Depression. Hooverville was a popular name for the tent cities that were common living spaces for the poor and out of work during the 1930s. They were named after President Herbert Hoover, because he was largely blamed for the depression. As self proclaimed Red Hook historian John Burkhard explains,

The prime occupants of Hoover City in Red Hook were merchant seamen who lost their positions aboard the ships that came to Brooklyn from various foreign nations. These shipping companies could not afford to hire the manpower needed to return home with the cargo so they cut costs by sailing shorthanded. They virtually abandoned hundreds of men every time they set sail, creating a mass of hard working men with no jobs and no place to stay. Those who were abandoned chose instead to convert the tin and other waste found in these lots to livable housing. They did so in order to be close to possible sailing employment.

This Hooverville was one of the reasons why the Red Hook Houses, still one of the largest public housing projects in the city, was constructed just north of here in 1938. But we will talk a little bit more about that later.

Now, rather than an empty lot filled with ramshackle dwellings, we are sitting on the steps of one of the oldest public pools in the city. Public bathing was not new to Red Hook; the Parks Department had maintained a floating pool at the foot of Conover Street during the early 1900s.

But this pool was built in 1936 along with 10 other pools throughout the city through funding from the New Deal's Works Progress Administration under the guide of Robert Moses, then the city's Parks Commissioner. These new pool complexes quickly gained recognition as being among the most remarkable public

facilities constructed in the country and came to be known as one of Moses's triumphs, particularly in Red Hook. Not all of Moses's projects were well received in the area, but we'll get to that later.

Richard Gambino, a former resident of the neighborhood, used to spend a lot of time here as a child in the 1950s.

We all became terrific swimmers and just about all of us became lifeguards eventually. And we all learned, by the way, learned to swim in the Red Hook pool. So that's where we all learned to swim and would spend the entire day during summers there. Our parents would give us a quarter, then it went to 35 cents, admission, and they'd give us some money to buy some lunch and snacks. The one bad thing was that we'd get terribly sun burnt. As an adult I got melanoma and almost died from it. But it was a very happy experience at the time. We learned to swim so well that as I said, four out of the six became lifeguards.

The pool's design is representative of the Art Moderne style popular in the 1930s and the large, brick bathhouse we are sitting next to doubles as a gymnasium during the off months.

The pool opened on August 17th, 1936. 40,000 people attended the opening, which was presided over by Mayor LaGuardia and Robert Moses, leading The New York Times to describe it as "Red Hook's event of the year."

Background/Demographics

Before we start walking, we should talk a little bit about the neighborhood, what it looks like, and who lives here.

Red Hook is a small and relatively isolated neighborhood. It's surrounded on three sides by water, and separated from the rest of Brooklyn by the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel and the Gowanus Expressway. It lacks access to public

transportation: it does not have a subway station within its boundaries and, until January 2013 when the MTA extended service on the B57, it had only one bus line, the B61. With a population of just over 10,000 people in an area just under one square mile, it is much less densely populated than the rest of the city.

Red Hook has historically been a poor, working class neighborhood, with many of its residents working on the waterfront. The Red Hook Houses are the largest public housing project in Brooklyn and close to 7,000 people officially reside there--nearly 70 percent of the neighborhood's population.

Gentrification is happening in Red Hook and it is easy to see by looking at the demographic changes apparent in the Census data from 1990 through 2010. The population of the neighborhood itself has stayed relatively stable over the last 20 years, but the black population decreased significantly, while the white population rose slightly and the Hispanic population increased by 16%.

The unemployment rate in the neighborhood was nearly 22% in 1990. By 2010 it dropped to 17%, however this rate is still roughly double the unemployment rate of Brooklyn and New York City as a whole.

Red Hook is still a long way from being considered an affluent neighborhood. The percentage of the population under the poverty line has decreased from 46% in 1990 to 39% in 2010. However, in 2010, the median household income in Red Hook was still less than half that of Brooklyn and New York City.

With the influx of large businesses like Fairway and IKEA, Red Hook has become a place worth investing in and a destination for shoppers of a certain demographic and social status.

There are two different realities in this neighborhood, very often in very sharp contrast. The old neighborhood, where you have the descendents of the of the first, of the first people of Brooklyn, the dock workers, when there was a very strong shipping industry and they settled here. And it's a very close knit community, very strong, I would say mostly European American. And then, of course, there's the other Red Hook, which is composed of the projects. Right here in Red Hook, they built one of the biggest and first projects in the city. Now, it's home to a majority of African American and Latino American residents, which have also lived in the community for many years. So, it is quite a different experience, because one, you know, it faces the challenges of poverty, of discrimination, living in an environment that is often very difficult and still reminds of the old New York, the old Red Hook: the Red Hook that was considered very dangerous, it was considered one of the worst neighborhoods in Brooklyn. The decay and abandonment that came with that, which is still apparent as you enter the projects. So you have the two very different communities that very seldomly get together.

That's Cesar Fuentes, the executive director of the Red Hook Food Vendors; we'll talk to him a bit more in a minute. But this idea of two realities, of two Red Hooks, it's ever-present here and we will continue to see it as we walk around.

Red Hook Park and the Food Vendors

Okay, stand up, it's time to get moving. When you get to the foot of the stairs, turn left on Bay Street and walk toward Clinton Street. Stop when you get to the corner.

If it is between April and October, you probably see a lot of activity. It's soccer season and several semi-professional Latin American leagues play here. Do you see trucks lining the edges of the park? Those are the Red Hook Food

Vendors serving hungry soccer fans and passersby alike. Go ahead and cross the street and check them out.

If you are hungry, you should get something to eat. Everything is good here, but I would recommend the pupusas from El Olomega. Pupusas are corn patties filled with cheese and meat or vegetables, a traditional dish from El Salvador. El Olomega won the 2013 Vendy Award, an award given out by the Street Vendor Project each year to the best street vendors in the city. Four of the Red Hook food vendors have won the top prize since the awards began in 2004. So you can bet it's good.

Go ahead and pause the tour while you get your food. You can turn it back on once you have purchased your meal and have found a comfortable place to enjoy it.

Have you gotten something to eat and found a good place to sit? Good. Now let's talk a little bit about the history of these vendors.

When the Red Hook Food Vendors started out here in the 1970s, most were friends or family of the soccer players. They just wanted good, home-cooked food to eat while they watched the games, so they set up makeshift tents with small grills and started cooking.

Eleazar Perez owns Piezetlan, a Mexican stand named after her hometown in Puebla. Her truck won the 2012 Vendy Award.

IN SPANISH Fabian's father, Eleazar's husband used to play soccer in Red Hook in the late 1980s and so she started coming here with him. There were a lot of people here and there were people serving food already back then. She was always ambitious and so she got the idea that

she should start making some food and selling it. So that's how it started for her. She started coming here with a small grill and 25 years later we are here still.

She started coming here with her husband when he played soccer here in the 1980s. People were already serving food by then and she decided to join them, bringing a small grill and cooking up Mexican dishes. She's been here now for 25 years.

Although the vendors only serve food on the weekends for six months of the year, it takes a lot of time and effort to keep these carts running. Marcos Lainez, co-owner of El Olomega:

This is a seven days job. I mean, we are here from 8 o'clock till basically 10 o'clock at night, Saturday and Sunday. Monday, of course is cleaning, everything has to get cleaned. Tuesday, we start shopping, buying pork. We need to fry the pork. We need to get ready, pork takes a lot of time to fry, it's a lot of meat. Wednesday is cabbage, onions, tomatoes, you name it. Wednesday we get deliveries, as well as cheese, have to shred all the cheese. Thursday, getting ready for, all the things that we've been preparing the last three days. Friday is sort of relaxing day, just getting ready for Saturday, loading up the van, cook, all the drinks, preparing the final details for Saturday. And basically, there is on and off time, because when you're your own boss nobody tells you to rush, so you do things at your own pace, you can work for 3 or 4 hours, relax, stop, and go back to work whenever you want. So that's the beauty and that's why its seven days a week, because we don't have, okay we are going to work for 10 hours and get all of this done. Of course, that's just for the park and so it's a seven days, six month, really hard work. No days off, no free time.

So in the morning, my father does most of the early work. He load up things, all the things that we need to bring to the park, drinks, coke, pepsi, load up the cabbage and all the ingredients, I mean the meat, the pork, the chicken, you name it. So he's up early, probably like 5:30. And he's also the last one to go to bed because he loves to work. We keep telling him to stay home but he doesn't want to. One time he threatened to go back to El Salvador because he wasn't needed here. So he got upset so now we just let him work. That's what he wants and that's what keeps him going. He's 77 years old, but he's probably stronger than me.

When the vendors first started selling food, the neighborhood was not bringing in many people from outside the community and there was a lot of crime in the area.

Cesar Fuentes, the executive director of the Red Hook Food Vendors:

What happened post-90s is that there was development started changing and changing the face of Red Hook. Former areas that were abandoned and left undesirable were suddenly becoming desirable. Therefore, the specter of gentrification came about in the neighborhood. And that perhaps was the most influencing factor in our market being threatened, more than anything else. So, I was called to action. My role was to take something that was already broken and try to fix it, and try to find a reason to exist. Locally, we find good allies and we were given a chance. They understood what we were doing and they understood that these allegations were based on less probably the cost of the vendors and more out of a neglect of a system that didn't care to come clean the park as they would do in other areas, that neglected for many years the areas that were undesirable. So therefore recognized that the vendors were treated as a guinea pig with a lot of the illnesses that were already existant. And we took matters into our own actions. We started a very intense process of clean up of the park. We were given, first two weeks, to clean up the act. And what I did was every time the event was here we didn't have someone to clean the park so one of my things as an organizer was to organize some trash bags and some good gloves and started cleaning.

More often than not I would stay here past midnight, past one. Mind you, there was still, Red Hook was still trying to get out of the crack capital title that it had and therefore, there was a lot of prostitution, there was a lot of violence, there was a lot of drug abuse. So I would pay protection to the local homeless people. They became my friends, I befriended them, I gave them food, I gave them a little bit of money in exchange for them to not harm me and let me do my job and clean. Eventually we organized and eventually we earned the trust of parks and we earned the right to stay for a month and then another month and then six months and then a year.

But things started changing around the neighborhood over the last 10 years.

As the gentrification really took affect in Red Hook the area, then the people, we started experiencing the presence of more non-Latinos coming to the ballfields. Experiencing something that to, I guess, something that for those traveling a lot they would experience in small towns in Mexico

or Latin America, Colombia, Central America and that it was so close. And the food that was so good.

We did not have trucks at that time. We actually had tables and grills and tents and we still had bands, but we had colorful, mercado type style setups that people tend to like just as much as they liked the food. The experience, the overall experience, the connection with the vendors. It blew and then we started getting the articles from big names, from Time Out New York, Daily News, then came the New York Times. After the New York Times, they really exploded.

And in 2007, the Red Hook food vendors came under the scrutiny of the Health Department and the Parks Department. It was decided that the vendors had to place a bid with the Parks Department to become official park concession vendors in order to continue serving food.

After a long bidding process, they were awarded permits to serve food in the park from April to October. However, in order to do that, they had to comply with certain Health Department policies, which meant no more open food market. Instead, they had to purchase and retrofit food carts or trucks to serve their food out of. This drastically changed the atmosphere of the park. Marcos Lainez describes the differences between serving food from open air tents and the new food trucks.

Going from the tents to the truck is nice. I like it. Customers don't like it. I mean we have advantages and disadvantages. When we had to bring the tents it was a lot of work, loading the vans, setting up the grills, setting up the tables, setting up the tents. That's a big disadvantage. With the food trucks, it's better because like I say, our truck gets cleaned on Friday night after work. You know, after I get off from work, I go to the food truck, load it and clean it and when we come here it's just a matter of like parking and turning grills on. So that's a plus. This disadvantage is that you don't have the relationship that we used to have with customers. Like when my mother started, everybody, up to now, everybody is still asking for my mother, I mean she's been retired for probably like 12 years already

but people still remember her. They're always asking how is your mom, how is she doing, is she okay and so on, so you had all this friendship with customer family type because, you know, they come here every weekend. It's amazing, you know, soccer players, they come in, it's like year after year after year. So you get to know them, you get to talk to them, and you know you get that friendship which, you know, with the food trucks is lost. Because you are enclosed in four walls, only a window. It's a barrier with, you know, you and the customers. That was lost. And the dis-- another disadvantage is the cost. Insurance, parking, a lot of overhead costs, which you know, we are here for 6 months and we have to, we have to save money for 6 months that we're not here. Because we're still paying for parking, we're still paying for garage and all those overhead costs, we didn't have before. We just had a van, everything was put away, grills, tables, tents, and that was about it.

The changes were not feasible for many of the vendors, so the group you see here today is much smaller than the original group of vendors. The higher profile soccer games no longer take place here either, they've moved over to the Caton Avenue fields near Prospect Park. But the vendors continue to serve their food every weekend, despite the changing faces of their customers.

Not really, well it probably affected us for the better, because Red Hook community has changed. People aren't afraid to come to Red Hook anymore. Last year, our food truck broke down and we were afraid to leave it here so we had to pay someone to stay inside the truck all night long because we couldn't move it. And I asked him how it was and he's like, oh, it's normal I saw people walking all night long. Which is something that you couldn't even think about in the late 1980s because the area was so dangerous, now you can see people at 5 o'clock in the morning jogging here. I mean we still have the same Latinos here, but like I say a lot of the Latino players, they didn't move out of New York, a lot of the soccer players are playing in different parks.

Eleazar Perez of Piezetlan says the neighborhood has changed a lot,

IN SPANISH She said the neighborhood has changed a lot because back then it was mostly the latin community that used to come here and the area was was notorious for being, the reputation it had was not being the best area in New York City. But it changed a lot. What changed from then to

now was that we get a lot more people from different cultures, races, it's more mixed now, not just mostly latin based community.

She said it's not good and not bad, it's right in the middle. She really can't say, because at the end of the day we still serve people but compared to what it was back then, a lot of people used to come, now it's just, it's in between, not good not bad.

She says it's more mixed now with people from many different cultures, which is not good or bad for her. There aren't as many people coming to the park, but at the end of the day she still loves serving people.

If you are done eating, cross the street and head south on Clinton Street toward the water. Walk about a block. Just before you get to Halleck Street there should be a walking path to your left that will take you along the edge of the park. Follow it through the park.

The Waterfront and Red Hook History

As we walk along the park and the water, we should talk a little bit about the history of the neighborhood and how it's changed over the years, in particular, the history of the waterfront.

Red Hook was first settled by Native Americans. The Dutch bought the land from the Native Americans in 1636 and named it Red Hook, which means Red Point in Dutch, for the reddish color of its soil and the original shape of the peninsula that juts out into New York Harbor. Red Hook became part of the town of Brooklyn in 1657.

The 19th century was an era of intense commercial development for Red Hook, and by the time of the Civil War its waterfront had become an international

port and the busiest shipping center in the nation. In the 1840s, entrepreneurs like Colonel Daniel Richards, James S.T. Stranahan, and William Beard began to build the Atlantic Basin, along the west side of the neighborhood and completed in 1850 and the Erie Basin, which we are coming up to just ahead of us, completed in 1864. These were massive dock basins lined with wharves, brick and stone warehouses, or “stores,” and grain silos and grain elevators designed to receive, store, and transfer ship cargo.

Do you see that tall abandoned structure jutting out into the water to your left? That’s one of the old grain elevators, built to store grain that was being shipped through the port.

Red Hook’s growth was driven by the shipping industry, and its population in the 19th and early 20th centuries was characterized by various European immigrant groups who came to the area in search of jobs as dockworkers: first Irish, German, and Norwegian, and later Italian and Puerto Rican immigrants.

Red Hook’s dockworkers lived in rowhouses, many of them converted into boarding houses. Squatters contributed to Red Hook’s negative image: in the 1880s, a community of 2,000 squatters lived, along with several hundred head of livestock, in a shanty town known as “Slab City” located near Hamilton Avenue.

This community of immigrant dockworkers was not liked by the rest of the Brooklyn community and it quickly gained a reputation.

As early as 1872, the local newspaper, the Brooklyn Eagle, was calling Red Hook the “grand central and amalgamated cesspool and sink of low life in Brooklyn.”

By the early twentieth century, Red Hook’s seedy reputation had been solidified by stories of the rowdy sailors who frequented the taverns along Smith Street, the violent scuffles between “gashouse” gangs, and finally the emergence of the Mafia and organized crime in the 1920s.

This image of Red Hook as the home of a sleazy waterfront underworld started appearing in pop culture. Elia Kazan’s famous 1954 film, *On The Waterfront*, although filmed in New Jersey, was meant to represent the entire New York waterfront.

[Clip from *On The Waterfront*: I could've had class, I could have been a contender, I could have been somebody!]

The film, featuring Marlon Brando’s famous Oscar-winning performance, was based on a series of articles published in the New York *Sun* in 1948 by reporter Malcolm Johnson, called “Crimes on the Waterfront.” In this series, he detailed the extensive organized crime and corruption that was rampant along New York’s ports, including Red Hook. He started his series by outlining the extent of this corruption.

New York’s great waterfront, representing an investment of approximately \$900 million in port facilities, has been aptly described as an “outlaw frontier” where organized crime flourishes unchecked at the cost of untold millions of dollars annually to the port’s shipping.

Here, in the world’s busiest port, with its 906 piers, 100 ferry landings, 96 car-float landings and 57 ship building, dry dock and repair plants,

criminal gangs operate with apparent immunity from the law. These gangs are well organized and their control of the piers is absolute. Their greatest weapon is terror, invoked by their strong arm squads and their gunmen. Their power is such that they are able to levy tribute on every pound of cargo arriving at this port. This is accomplished through highly lucrative rackets controlled by gangsters.

The fact that lawlessness and racketeering exist on New York's waterfront is nothing new. Indeed, that fact is part of this story. The point is that for many years little or nothing has been done to bring law and order and efficiency to the waterfront. As a result, the situation today probably is worse than ever before.

The playwright Arthur Miller set his play *A View From the Bridge* in Red Hook. The play centers on the stresses of the waterfront economy and the illegal immigration of Italians flooding the neighborhood.

Alfieri, the lawyer who tells the story, describes the neighborhood at the beginning of the play:

I am inclined to notice the ruins in things; perhaps because I was born in Italy...I only came here when I was 25. In those days, Al Capone, the greatest Carthaginian of all, was learning his trade on these pavements, and Frankie Yale himself was cut precisely in half by a machine gun on the corner of Union Street, two blocks away. Oh, there were many here who were justly shot by unjust men. Justice is very important here.

But this is Red Hook, not Sicily. This is the slum that faces the bay on the seaward side of the Brooklyn Bridge. This is the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world. And now we are quite civilized, quite American. Now we settle for half, and I like it better. I no longer keep a pistol in my filing cabinet.

That bit about Al Capone? It's true, he got his start in the neighborhood.

He worked under Frankie Yale who espoused a new mafia work ethic of

"business over ego." Capone would joke that he got "a Yale education." After

Capone established himself in Chicago, Yale ran the New York leg of Capone's Canadian whiskey smuggling business during Prohibition.

When the number of hijackings of the whiskey deliveries spiked suspiciously, Capone sent some of his men to investigate and found that Yale was skimming some of the business for himself. On July 1, 1928, Yale was gunned down in south Brooklyn. Police questioned Capone, but got nothing out of him.

H.P. Lovecraft also set one of his short stories here, *The Horror at Red Hook*. The story describes mysterious, supernatural events happening in the basement of a building in the neighborhood. Things like this happen in Red Hook, explains Lovecraft, because it is already so full of underworld activities.

Red Hook is a maze of hybrid squalor near the ancient waterfront opposite Governor's Island, with dirty highways climbing the hill from the wharves to that higher ground where the decayed lengths of Clinton and Court Streets lead off toward the Borough Hall. Its houses are mostly of brick, dating from the first quarter to the middle of the nineteenth century, and some of the obscurer alleys and byways have that alluring antique flavour which conventional reading leads us to call "Dickensian". The population is a hopeless tangle and enigma; Syrian, Spanish, Italian, and negro elements impinging upon one another, and the fragments of Scandinavian and American belts lying not far distant. It is a babel of sound and filth, and sends out strange cries to answer the lapping of oily waves at its grimy piers and the monstrous organ litanies of harbour whistles. Here long ago a brighter picture dwelt, with clear-eyed mariners on the lower streets and homes of taste and substance where the larger houses line the hill. One can trace the relics of this former happiness in the trim shapes of the buildings, the occasional graceful churches, and the evidences of original art and background in bits of detail here and there—a worn flight of steps, a battered doorway, a wormy pair of decorative columns or pilasters, or a fragment of once green space with bent and rusted iron railing. The houses are generally in solid blocks, and now and then a many-windowed cupola arises to tell of days when the households of captains and ship-owners watched the sea.

From this tangle of material and spiritual putrescence the blasphemies of an hundred dialects assail the sky. Hordes of prowlers real shouting and singing along the lanes and thoroughfares, occasional furtive hands suddenly extinguish lights and pull down curtains, and swarthy, sin-pitted faces disappear from windows when visitors pick their way through. Policemen despair of order or reform, and seek rather to erect barriers protecting the outside world from the contagion. The clang of the patrol is answered by a kind of spectral silence, and such prisoners as are taken are never communicative. Visible offences are as varied as the local dialects and run the gamut from the smuggling of rum and prohibited aliens through divers stages of lawlessness and obscure vice to murder and mutilation in their most abhorrent guises. That these visible affairs are not more frequent is not to the neighbourhood's credit. More people enter Red Hook than leave it—or at least, than leave it by the landward side—and those who are not loquacious are the likeliest to leave.

For Lovecraft the horror depicted in his story comes and goes but not Red Hook,

It is always the same...The soul of the beast is omnipresent and triumphant, and Red Hook's legions of blear-eyed, pockmarked youths still chant and cures and howl as they file from abyss to abyss, none knows whence or whither, pushed on by blind laws of biology which they may never understand.

But not everyone saw Red Hook as the crime-ridden neighborhood it was made out to be. Richard Gambino, now a retired college professor, grew up nearby in the 1950s.

I found a lot of this was nonsense. There was crime down there, there was corruption, as in great cities, it was not just the waterfront but it was everywhere, and that still goes for today. Every other news story is about corruption somewhere, including government, police forces, and so on. But in terms of fearing it? No, not at all. The area was very safe, women walked without any fear. As a matter of fact, the men were extremely protective. If you wanted to commit a crime, I wouldn't go to Red Hook to do it when I was growing up. You would be opposed, believe me. The stereotype was just silly. The longshoremen were very strong, they worked hard physical labor, but they were not violent men at all. I knew them, they were my family.

What he remembers was the tight-knit social world of a primarily immigrant neighborhood.

During that period, as I said, it was an Italian-American neighborhood almost exclusively. There were just two people in the neighborhood when I was young that were not Italian. The Italian language was spoken commonly, as well as English. So for example I grew up bilingual. My father was born in Italy and was an immigrant and my mother was born here just after her parents came from Italy. My grandparents lived downstairs and only spoke Italian, never learned to speak English.

Most came from South Italy, which was the impoverished part. And one of the ironies were they learned to speak each other's dialects here but they didn't need to learn those dialects in Italy. They had to learn those dialects here in Red Hook, Brooklyn. So I learned to understand not only the Sicilian dialect, which was spoken in my grandparents home, but I learned other dialects that were spoken in the street and stores.

The Italian experience was such that I saw girls only in school because they were never out after school, except when they were with their parents or other people who were in affect chaperones. Boys on the other hand, we lived on the street corner. In my case we lived on the corner of 2nd Place and Clinton Street, in all weather. Because that's what we did, we didn't go to each other's homes, that was not the practice when I was growing up.

Of course, the presence of the waterfront and its importance in their lives was always there.

The waterfront was very much a working waterfront in those days. It was before shipping containers, so cargo was loaded loosely. Today it's all in containers, you don't even know what's being shipped. We saw things being shipped and imported as well. Lots of food, for example, like bananas being brought in all the time. A great many men in the area were longshoremen. They used to walk around with the baling hooks in their belts. The longshoreman jobs, the waterfront shaped the economy of the whole area.

Gambino grew up on 2nd Place and Clinton Street, which, according to today's definition, would be on the edge of Carroll Gardens rather than Red Hook. But at the time Red Hook was a much larger area. Gambino witnessed the

construction of the public works project that would change those neighborhood designations. His elementary school was next to the opening of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel.

I watched the tunnel being built from the schoolyard. We used to stand there during lunch time and recess and we watched them building the tunnel from the Brooklyn end. With the big equipment and we actually heard explosions when they first started. It was being built when I was in grade school.

The BQE divided the area, but there were overpasses. It made shopping on the other side of the highway more difficult because you had to walk over an overpass, which was out of the way, so that did affect the area. The Brooklyn Battery Tunnel opened to traffic on May 25th, 1950. Robert Moses was also in charge of this project as the chairman of the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority.

The tunnel connects to the Gowanus Expressway, also built around the same time, and the two together create the northern border of Red Hook—the only side of the neighborhood not bordered by water—helping to isolate it from the rest of Brooklyn. Roughly 45,000 cars come through the tunnel a day.

After the tunnel and highway were built, another major shift took place that drastically affected the neighborhood: Containerization. We will talk about what that means in a minute.

You should be coming to a fork in the park path, take the path to your right and continue to the intersection.

You want to cross Columbia Street and then turn left and follow Columbia Street to where it connects with Halleck Street. There you will turn right.

IKEA and the Erie Basin

To your left is the big blue and yellow box that is IKEA. Continue walking along Halleck Street as we talk about the store.

IKEA first started planning a location in the neighborhood as early as 2004, but opposition to building a big box store on the waterfront won out for a while. After much public debate, the store opened in the summer of 2008 creating a media frenzy.

HOST: In three weeks time, the Swedish furniture giant Ikea will open its first store ever in New York City. Though millions of New Yorkers know Ikea from trips to outlets in the suburbs outside of New York, WNYC's Ilya Marritz reports that this store will be different.

REPORTER: Every Ikea ever built in America – there are 34 of them now – sits next to a busy highway.

But the 35th Ikea, in Red Hook, Brooklyn, is close to a mile from the nearest highway. It sits on a on a pier overlooking New York Harbor.

There were a lot of mixed opinions about IKEA moving in among locals. Some worried about the increased traffic; others that were pro-IKEA touted the job opportunities the store would bring.

But one of the now almost forgotten arguments against bringing the store to Red Hook was that the Swedish furniture maker wanted to build on top of what once was one of the major docks of the Erie Basin and therefore would be preventing maritime businesses from using the waterfront.

In particular IKEA built on top of a graving dock, which is a place where ships can dock, water can be drained, and the bottom of the vessel can be repaired. WNYC reporter Amy Eddings visited the dock before it was destroyed.

EDDINGS: I'm on a boat, heading to the old New York Shipyard. IKEA bought 22 acres of the site for its store, and is already tearing down some buildings. It also plans to destroy a ship repair facility, known as a graving dock, that's been around since the 1860s.

DULONG: It's basically a bathtub with a door at the end, that's the best way to describe it.

EDDINGS: Jessica DuLong is the engineer of the boat we're on, the John J. Harvey. She peers into this huge "bathtub," which is two football fields long. IKEA plans on paving it over, and using it as a parking lot for 1,400 cars. But waterfront advocates are making a last-ditch effort to save the Erie Basin graving dock.

DULONG: it just makes more sense to use things for what they were designed to be used for? Than to disregard that use and to just assume that it will never be useful again.

EDDINGS: The graving dock was not considered very useful at the time of its sale. Joe Murphy, one of the principals of U-S Dredging Corporation, which sold the shipyard to IKEA, says he wanted out because he wasn't making money. In its final environmental impact statement, in 2004, IKEA found it would displace 85 jobs....only 11 of which, it said, were directly related to marine repair. It called the dry dock "underutilized." Besides, it said, ships had other places to go in the harbor if Erie Basin's graving dock shut down.

David Sharps, executive director of the Waterfront Barge Museum, which we will visit in a few minutes, had very strong feelings about the destruction of the graving dock.

IKEA is a big box store, it's not a water dependent use. It was shutting down the ship repair yard Red Hook had since Civil War times. And now we don't have that, we lost it. When the property was sold the shipyard was still functional. A graving dock can save ships, it can be a theater, because it can be dry, it can be half empty, it can be full, it can be a ship repair yard for historic ships that can't find other places. It could work on research vessels. A graving dock is a large dock that is below sea level that you can float huge ships in, close the gate behind, pull the plug in the bathtub and the ship sits down and you can get under it and fix it. I mean come on, if you had to site a facility like that today, you'd be hard-pressed to find one. And we had one that was functional, useful, being used and what did we do? We made it a parking lot.

You should be nearing the IKEA parking lot. Go ahead and walk into the lot. If you look down, you should be able to see the paving stones that IKEA used to mark out where the graving dock used to be.

Although it paved over an important part of New York's waterfront infrastructure, many would argue that IKEA has been relatively good for the neighborhood after all. The increased traffic never materialized, IKEA opened job applications to locals first, it built a greenway along the waterfront and it's brought more people through the neighborhood on its ferries and shuttles.

Unfortunately, many locals argue that IKEA's customers don't actually stay in the neighborhood very long.

Continue walking in the same direction through the parking lot and continue onto Beard Street.

Waterfront Today

So how did it come to be that what was once a thriving waterfront neighborhood filled with dockworkers and a constant stream of ships now has a parking lot built on top of a graving dock? The answer has to do with how the shipping industry has changed over the last 60 years.

Up through World War II goods being shipped were packaged in relatively small boxes and moved with manpower. To be efficient, large numbers of longshoremen were needed to load and unload ships.

Containerization changed all of that, because shipping containers were large and could be moved from ships directly onto trucks or trains by gantry cranes, cutting the manpower needed.

What is a container? If you look across the street to your right, you should see a stack of brightly colored corrugated metal boxes. Those are shipping containers.

Containerization started taking hold in the 1960s and the docks along most of the Brooklyn waterfront, including Red Hook were unprepared for the shift. So much of the shipping industry of New York Harbor moved over to the New Jersey side. This drastically changed the economic landscape of not only Red Hook, but also much of Brooklyn. Longshoremen were no longer in high demand.

Today, New York Harbor is still home to one of the largest shipping operations in the United States, in fact New York is still the third busiest port, behind only Los Angeles and Long Beach. And 10 times the material comes into New York Harbor now compared with the 1960s, but it only requires 1/16th the workforce.

Look to your left toward the water. What you see here is what much of the Brooklyn waterfront looks like now. There's not much left of the Red Hook working waterfront. There is a cruise ship terminal on the west side in the Atlantic Basin and the Red Hook Container Port is just north of it, along the northernmost section of Van Brunt Street.

But most of the people in Red Hook don't work in maritime industries anymore and the waterfront doesn't affect the neighborhood's economy in the significant way that it used to.

On the other hand, this migration of the shipping industry from Brooklyn to New Jersey has allowed the waterfront to become accessible to the general public in a way that it never has before. Seventy years ago, you would have never been able to get as close to the water as we will be during this tour without working in the shipping industry.

Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition

Continue walking down Beard Street. Turn left when you get to the corner and continue down Van Brunt Street.

As you walk down Van Brunt Street toward the water, you are next to some of the oldest buildings in Brooklyn. These warehouses were built during the Civil War era and used primarily for housing shipping materials.

These buildings were bought by Greg O'Connell, a former police detective, who renovated them for mixed commercial use. Many credit his investment in property in the neighborhood as one of the major factors leading to its revitalization.

You should be getting close to the end of the street. In the last space of the warehouse to your left is a gallery for a nonprofit organization called the Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition.

If the gallery is open, feel free to step inside and look around. You can pause the tour if you prefer, or continue listening to hear about the history of BWAC as you browse the art collections.

BWAC, as it's commonly referred, started in 1978 as just a group of artists in the neighborhood of DUMBO, Brooklyn who worked along the waterfront and put on free art shows in space borrowed from real estate developers who had vacant commercial space.

For a long time the organization didn't have a permanent gallery location. Greg O'Connell began offering them space that he had vacant in his warehouses. Eventually he gave BWAC this permanent, two-story space along the water. The organization has 25,000 square feet of permanent gallery space here, which allows them to put on pretty big shows.

BWAC's art shows bring thousands of people to the neighborhood every year. When the coalition first started having shows in the area in the 1990s, most of the people coming to their shows were coming from other parts of the city.

John Strohbeen, longtime executive director of BWAC, got involved with the organization when he moved into an artist loft in Red Hook in the 1990s.

When I joined the organization in 1994, I would make sure that he was out of that area of Red Hook after dark. And on one occasion, I got locked into the second floor gallery because the people didn't realize I was in there and they'd locked all the exterior doors, I called a car service to come down so that I could throw the keys out the window to the car service to unlock it from the outside. The car service came down and then he just sat there for a while. Then a second one showed up and they talked for a while. They'd sent backup just to make sure that they weren't going to be mugged.

Due to gentrification in the neighborhood, more and more of the visitors coming to BWAC shows are locals.

With a space this close to the waterfront, the BWAC gallery was hit hard during Hurricane Sandy.

When Hurricane Sandy hit, BWAC's 25,000 sq. foot gallery is right at water level. Our fall show had closed the weekend before Sandy came. We moved any art that was still there up to the second floor, because Irene the year before had done some damage on the ground floor. We were prepared up to 3 or 4 feet of water surge, but it was 11-foot water surge. The first floor up to about 7 feet was washed through. We came in the weekend after and realized that everything was going to have to be thrown away. We had 500 volunteers come help them strip it. Many people who came to help were people who had come to their shows. The number of volunteers trailed off after that until it got too cold to work.

BWAC was able to raise close to \$50,000 in order to do the necessary renovations and repairs to the space after the storm, But it delayed the opening of their 2013 season. Strohbeen is confident, however, that they will be prepared for the next storm when it comes.

After you exit the BWAC gallery, walk along the waterfront promenade to your left; you should be walking with the water to your left and the Fairway supermarket to your right.

Fairway opened in this space in 2006 and not only did it bring good, fresh food to a neighborhood that was lacking a grocery store, it brought more foot traffic to the area from other parts of Brooklyn. Many in the neighborhood cite the Fairway opening as one of the most influential changes to the neighborhood in the last 10 years.

Sunny's Bar

The waterfront promenade should start turning right and eventually turn into Conover Street. Up ahead and to your right, on Conover Street, you should see a sign hanging from an otherwise nondescript storefront that says, 'Bar' with an antique truck sitting on the street next to it. That's Sunny's Bar, one of the longest running bars in the neighborhood and now a cultural institution.

Originally known as John's Restaurant and Bar, the small establishment was a popular spot for the area's longshoremen to unwind after a long day of work. By the 1980s, the shipping industry was gone, the neighborhood was in decline, and a new, artsier clientele began drifting in. The bar eventually became a melting pot, patronized by Red Hook newcomers and old salts alike.

In the 1990s, Sunny's operated under the name Red Hook Yacht and Kayak Club, posing as a nonprofit club where customers kept track of their own tabs and purchased drinks with a \$3 "donation." The place became a celebrated social hub, known for its wild Friday night festivities. It was briefly shuttered in 2001 after being cited for numerous violations, including serving liquor without a license.

For several months Sunny Balzano, the bar's proprietor and grandson of the original owner, his wife, and a handful of devoted community members worked to get the building and the licenses up to code. But the interior decorative touches that give Sunny's a unique charm remained more or less untouched.

When the bar reopened, its new name paid tribute to the man who'd helped make it a community treasure. The bar's live music and art exhibitions highlight

the important role Red Hook's artist community has played in the venue's evolution. Saturday nights are bluegrass nights and musicians come from all over the city to jam together.

In 2012, Sunny's Bar was badly damaged by flooding brought on by Hurricane Sandy. Community support, including funds raised with an Indigogo campaign, has helped raise money for repairs. It finally reopened in August of 2013.

The bar opens at 8pm Wednesday through Friday and at 4pm on Saturdays and Sundays. If it's open, you are welcome to pause the tour and stop by for a cold one. You might even see Sunny hanging out in the back.

Waterfront Barge Museum

Across the street from Sunny's should be a large parking lot. Cut through the parking lot over to the pier with a barge docked next to it.

There is one remnant of the waterfront activity here in Red Hook and that is the Waterfront Barge Museum housed in the Lehigh Valley #79, the barge you see ahead. Go on and walk up to it.

Barges like this one were once very important to the shipping industry here in the New York Harbor. There is no way for freight trains to cross the harbor—the nearest place freight trains can cross the Hudson River is just south of Albany. So one of the ways cargo used to be moved around the harbor was with barges like this one. The Lehigh Valley #79 would be loaded with cargo

either from trains or ships and towed across harbor to the train or ship that would take the cargo to its destination.

This barge now functions as a floating museum. If it's open, usually on Thursdays and Saturdays, step inside and take a look around.

It took two years just to get the mud out.

That's David Sharps. He is the executive director of the Waterfront Barge Museum and captain of the Lehigh Valley #79. If you've gone inside the barge, feel free to pause the tour and talk to him yourself.

He bought the boat and restored it in the 1980s. He moved it to Red Hook in 1994, after docking it a few different locations along the New Jersey side of the harbor. He's seen the neighborhood change drastically over the last 20 years.

When I first came to Red Hook there were wild dogs on the streets that ate two of my cats, both cats I had were eaten by the dogs that would run wild. You could not get Chinese food delivered here. It was, we don't go there. You hailed a cab in Manhattan and you told 'em you were going to Brooklyn Heights and when you got to Brooklyn Heights you go, oh, just go a bit further down, keep going a little further. You didn't tell them you were going to Red Hook because something would be wrong with their car or they'd just say no and pull away. You couldn't get a cab to Red Hook. We saw it change slowly. Everyone who comes to Red Hook gets excited because of our views of the harbor. The light is amazing because there are no high rises to block it. Everything just shines. Who looks at the face of the statue of liberty? That's red Hook. The statue of liberty is looking right at us.

Back then the barge hosted circuses, concerts and other performances on the weekends, which made it a destination for people who might not have come to Red Hook otherwise.

Just more and more people coming around. There were bikes on the weekends. It was great seeing strollers lining up for the circus. We'd have

a parking lot of strollers. Red Hook would get packed on nice summer nights, beautiful sunsets, breezes, good music, what's not to like.

When Hurricane Sandy hit in 2012, the barge survived without much damage.

We had myself and two other people were on the boat as the water started coming in and the first high tide came in. In the morning we realized there were going to be extraordinarily high tide. The tides were as high as Irene before the storm even came, six hours before. We spent days preparing. When the storm came we put on their life jackets and looked around and as things slowly developed it was apparent what needed to be done. We did a lot of small things that made big differences. All of these little precautions came together such that the boat stayed in shape, perpendicular to the dock, as the water came in the boat rose higher and higher. There were plenty of fenders out, fenders that floated, tires that didn't float that would protect the boat under the water line. And just when we thought that they were going to be experiencing even more problems the water stopped and receded. The only damages to the boat were the skylight panels were blown out and destroyed.

Although the barge made it through the storm largely unscathed, there were still emotional tolls.

I drew a line where the water line was, it's important not to let people forget.

Once you are done at the barge, head back down the pier and continue through the Pier 44 garden. Once you get to the edge of the garden, continue walking through the parking lot in front of you. When you get to the driveway, turn right and walk up to Van Dyke Street. Then turn left toward the dead end signs.

Steve's Authentic Key Lime Pies

You should be coming up to a large commercial warehouse with a couple of picnic tables sitting outside, inside that bright yellow door is Steve's Authentic Key Lime Pies.

Owner and Florida native Steve Tarpin started selling his now famous key lime pies in 1994 after a back injury left him unemployed.

That's how it started with the one restaurant. And I just decided, well, you know these guys that want the product are buying from the same pool of purveyors out there so if they like it, then maybe there's some other places that would like it. So I figured I would give it a shot, see if I could you know, build up a following. So initially my route was developed, I didn't have commercial plates or anything at the time. I was working out of a studio apartment. So I would take samples out and it was basically, I build a route up on places I could drive and double park and quickly run in and out of a place without getting a ticket.

Business grew quickly and he opened his first commercial kitchen in 1999, but he grew out of that space and moved to a new, bigger space in Red Hook in 2001.

Tarpin immediately enjoyed the neighborhood.

It was real different in the respect that, it's like a small town here. And back then, you could be driving down the main street, Van Brunt Street, someone's driving the opposite direction and you'd recognize them and you could just stop in the street and chat a little bit and if there was a car behind you they wouldn't be honking at you because they were waiting to talk to the person next.

Although most of his business is commercial, he does sell pies and limeade to walk-ins—go on in and grab one. At first there wasn't much foot traffic in the area. But after Fairway opened, he saw a lot more walk-ins.

And the first year that Fairway was opened we saw as many in that first year, walk-in customers as we had seen in the previous five years combined. Just because of the huge impact Fairway had in bringing people into the neighborhood. You know we slathered signs up here and there and you know, people--we were still pretty much out of the way but people loved stumbling across us.

So it brought in a different class, I guess you would say, it brought in a different class of people. You'd see women pushing strollers down the block, you know, nannies and such. Which we didn't ever--or rarely seen

prior to that. It was a working neighborhood up until that point rather than a residential neighborhood, where people worked outside.

Business was going well for Steve and for Red Hook,

...and then Sandy really threw a wrench into things for most of the businesses down here if not all of them. For us in particular, we suffered-- it was right about now, we're like a year out--so I always do really well with our walk-in business for Thanksgiving, we have a big Thanksgiving following. So we missed out on that. Plus we were out of electricity for two weeks so we lost all our perishables. We lost--we had a big financial loss, not only in the loss of income because we were a month without making product and getting it out to our customers, but all the material we lost, we didn't get to realize a profit on, we had to throw it away, plus we had to spend the money again to replace it and build up our inventory again. And then shortly after Sandy, once we got up and running, which wasn't--you know we were pretty quick. We didn't have materials, we had the kitchen running so we were actually cooking food here for the Red Hook Initiative and we were cooking chicken and potato and vegetable meals that we were taking out like every other day. But it took about a month until we had all our materials and we could get back on track and start to make deliveries to our regular customers. Which for us, I think we fared a lot better than a lot of the other businesses in Red Hook because they're more reliant on people coming here. Only our walk-in business relies on that, we are primarily a wholesale bakery, so we had all of our customer base in Manhattan and Brooklyn and Long Island who were waiting for us to get back into production. They were waiting for us to deliver product.

Tarpin had also wanted to move into a new space in Red Hook for a while. He had talked about it with the landlord for years but Hurricane Sandy provided a new opportunity to make the move.

But Sandy created this whole paradigm shift where things that were once looked at as possibilities, it just rearranged things and now it was-- presented them as a real possibilities to do immediately. So in that respect we refer to her as Saint Sandy, she opened up that door for us and we made the move on it and it's been a very positive outcome for us from Sandy.

After months of renovations and working to build out the new space, Steve's Authentic Key Lime Pies moved in the summer of 2013 just 8 months after the storm. It's this new location you are visiting now.

As for the neighborhood after Sandy, Tarpin has mixed feelings about what will happen.

I have some really clear ideas on what I'd like to see. I don't know if it's ever going to happen. I don't know. It's, it's just a strange setup for me. You know, I've heard the term after Sandy, a tightly knit community, which I don't--you know, I have friends and fellow business people in the community that I feel close to just because I've known 'em for a while and then I have other people that I really don't feel any connection with at all. So I am probably not one of those threads that's in the tightly-knit community. And I don't care. I'm not complaining about it. I don't mind. I would like to see merchants joined on a concerted effort without any like real strong personalities or politics getting involved. Just that we're all focused on helping each other out and focused on seeing the community grow in a healthy way. I don't know if that's going to happen.

But that doesn't mean that these key lime pies are going anywhere.

I think just the fact that it called us and said, here, we have a place for you. That it fits. We were matched. It's not like we've made a conscious decision, saying we're gonna be in Red Hook. Kind of, Red Hook passed us the invitation. And that's why we're still here. And when I say Red Hook, I don't mean the community so much as maybe I mean like, if there's a spirit that embodies this place, it's invited us in and says you're welcome here, we want you to stay. (laughing) I don't know if that makes any sense or not but that's how it feels. In spite of our detractors.

After you have grabbed a pie or limeade, head left toward Louis Valentino Jr. Pier and walk down to the end of the pier for one of the best views of the Statue of Liberty and New York Harbor in the city.

Louis Valentino Jr. Park & Pier/ Fort Defiance

This park is named after Louis Valentino, Jr., a firefighter and Parks Department lifeguard from Red Hook. He became a firefighter in 1984 and in 1993 was accepted to the elite Rescue Company 2 in Crown Heights. On February 5th, 1996, Valentino lost his life while searching for wounded firefighters in a three-alarm blaze in an illegal Flatlands garage. This pier was built in his memory.

Are you at the end of the pier? It's a wonderful view, isn't it? If you look to your right you should be able to see a group of cement blocks that spell out Red Hook and have become an iconic photo opportunity for many.

If you look to your left, along the wall of the building that you just came from is a mural called "Some Walls Are Invisible," painted in 2010. Dutch human rights charity Miles4Justice and the Red Hook Community Justice Center commissioned Groundswell to paint it. Groundswell is an organization founded in the mid-1990s that brings together artists, youth and community organizations to use art as a tool for social change. Their murals can be found all over the city.

"Some Walls Are Invisible" honors the 400th anniversary of Dutch settlement in North America. Fifteen young men and women researched current human rights issues to inform the design with relevant and thought-provoking images.

It examines the ways that visible attributes of race and ethnicity can be invisible barriers to equality and justice. These barriers can be overcome with careful attention to our shared community and principles of human rights. The

piece is comprised of two dominant images: a head that is exploding into facets and a young man holding an image of the earth with a section cut away. These images suggest that our identities and our world are comprised of powerful forces that can either drive us apart or unify us.

This is also roughly the site of Fort Defiance, an important but somewhat forgotten military fort during the Revolutionary War and the Battle of Brooklyn.

Fort Defiance was built in the spring of 1776 and proved it's worth that same August. The British were trouncing the motley American forces with sneak attacks from the rear and droves of ships ready to surround one of the most important ports of the region. As the British navy proceeded up the Bay, General Howe attacked Washington's army from two sides.

Washington retreated, heading through Gowanus, down Red Hook Lane, and into the harbor. The British navy didn't proceed very far into the upper harbor under the cannon attacks from Fort Defiance amid bad weather. Washington's watery retreat to Manhattan was clear of enemies and not a single life was lost.

While the battle was ultimately lost to the British, Washington's escape helped the U.S. to eventually win the war.

Turn back down the pier and head left toward the other entrance of the park. Then head right on Coffey Street. Walk two blocks down to Van Brunt Street. You'll notice that many of the streets around here, including Coffey Street, are still cobblestone.

Van Brunt Street

Turn left onto Van Brunt Street. This is one of the main drags of the neighborhood and where the gentrification that has taken place over the past 15 years is most evident. When people think of Red Hook nowadays, many of them think of Van Brunt Street.

Gentrification in Red Hook has been slow and varied, primarily because much of the property in the neighborhood is zoned for commercial use and the extreme lack of public transportation to the area. Even as changes started to take place in the early 2000s, many questioned whether Red Hook could become a “hot” neighborhood.

In an episode of the Brian Lehrer show on WNYC in 2006, Brian and his guests ask just that.

LEHRER: So think about real estate with waterfront views, cobblestone streets, art galleries and restaurants nearby, sounds like a glitzy neighborhood! Well, the neighborhood I'm speaking of is Red Hook and whether or not Red Hook is the next big thing in New York is under some dispute, maybe it's just the next big thing in media hype. Let's start by looking at this neighborhood culturally, how does Red Hook differ from other neighborhoods?

GUSKIND: As to Red Hook's whole hotness or not, it's really a media construct. Let's just say that Red Hook is warm.

LEHRER: What does that mean, make that concrete for me.

GUSKIND: Well it's a neighborhood in the process of becoming. It's in a transitional phase and the fact that's it's not a red hot neighborhood is ultimately a good thing for Red Hook if the development that takes place is slower place.

LEHRER: Gabriel, hot or not?

GABRIEL: I think the issue remains whether its a good thing if Red Hook become hot or not and I think we've seen other neighborhoods in Brooklyn that have suddenly become hot and it's not necessarily a good thing if Red Hook becomes hot.

Walk up the street and look around at some of the storefronts you pass. You can see that many of the new businesses opening up along the main drag include high-end shops and specialty stores. There is also a hip restaurant on the corner with cocktails and brunch specials aptly named Fort Defiance.

Continue on Van Brunt Street another block toward Wolcott Street. On this block you see Baked. This bakery opened in 2006 and has become well known for its cupcakes and other goods.

A little further down the block is the Kentler Drawing Space and art gallery. And on the corner is Hope & Anchor, a solid diner and a fun karaoke bar on Saturday nights. Turn right here and continue down Wolcott Street.

As you look around, consider the way this neighborhood has changed. Do you think Red Hook has become that “hot” neighborhood that people thought it would?

P.S. 15 Patrick Daly School/Morris Johnson

As you walk down Wolcott Street, to your left you will see an elementary school. That’s P.S. 15 Patrick F. Daly.

It’s named after a former principal of the school who in 1992 was killed in the crossfire of a drug related shooting. He had entered the Red Hook Houses in order to look for a student who left school crying after getting in a fight with another student and couldn’t be found.

This came at a time in the neighborhood’s history when, although it had been ravaged by drug use and drug related crime, Red Hook was trying to

rebound. Principal Daly had a large role in trying to change the neighborhood. He was considered a kind man who worked hard to help the children who attended his school in any way he could.

Joseph A. Fernandez, Chancellor of the New York City school system at the time, called Mr. Daly "one of those principals who went the extra mile for everybody."

Daly's death catapulted Red Hook into the media spotlight for all of the reasons that those in the neighborhood didn't want to be in the news for anymore.

However, the attention did spur a flood of investment into community programs. And many now think of it as a turning point for the neighborhood.

Morris Johnson, also known in the neighborhood as Pickles, remembers the event vividly.

It was turmoil here because a lot of people here felt that the police allowed this to happen, politicians allowed this to happen. They could clean this place up with no effort whatsoever, but because this man lost his life they put an effort to do something about it. Not enough as far as I'm concerned. Because it was expressed that this didn't have to happen.

Sometimes people in power just lay back and let things evolve till they wipe out each other. Dog eat dog, animals kill animals. But you have good people mixed in with this. So it was believed that if the police had done more Daly wouldn't have gotten killed. We can't say that.

But it still going on, drugs and people getting killed. Last year a kid got killed, why? Because of drugs.

Johnson grew up in Williamsburg and has lived in the neighborhood since the 1960s. He's seen drastic changes over the years, particularly in the way drug deals are conducted.

There's a big change because it's not so blatantly in the open, it's more undercover, more sneaking around selling drugs. Before it right in plain, in the street, they'd sell it right there. Now they have to go in a hallway or slip somebody and keep on going, but it's not as prevalent as before.

Johnson says the process of gentrification has also increased the police presence in the neighborhood. The biggest changes Johnson sees are on Van Brunt Street.

It's like the village over there now on Van Brunt Street. Police officers stop a young black male over there and ask what are you doing over here? He said I live out here! Years ago Van Brunt area was a drug area also, you have white kids, Italians, black kids selling drugs back there also. But that stopped once gentrification started. They started weeding them out.

When Hurricane Sandy hit, Johnson was stuck in the hospital recovering from an illness while his family dealt with the flooding in his home here on Wolcott Street.

It was a message for people to vacate but we had a message for a storm once before which didn't really do anything so everyone stayed. My daughter was downstairs and my wife was trying to move things just in case a little water came in. My daughter was in the kitchen and she looked and we have a backyard and a shed. She seen water come up over the shed. And she said, "Mom, abandon ship!" The toilet started bubbling water, the sink started bubbling water. The water hit the back door and the water just flowed in. They ran upstairs. The water came up to the fifth or six step, which left about three steps. The water just pushed in.

I lost a lot. It was my man cave. I lost a lot. I used to DJ, all my equipment is gone, my records are gone. My wife told me. But mainly I hadn't seen my wife in three or four days, because of Sandy she couldn't get out. And transportation wasn't running. So when I did see her, I cried, because I was worried, I had people calling the house, the electricity was down, nothing, I couldn't contact. I didn't know what happened to my family. So when she came, I was more relieved, I was happy.

A year and a half later he is still working on renovating and replacing parts of his home that were destroyed and many of his neighbors still need help rebuilding as well.

Johnson feels like the storm hurt Red Hook and relationships within the community. He says saw people taking things they didn't need or trying to benefit from the supplies and assistance donated by others rather than trying to help each other.

Greed. Simple word of greed. Anytime there's disaster, there's people that want to make a profit. And that's what I saw. People that didn't need it, got it. And people that did need it, didn't get it or didn't get enough of it. That's what I saw. And it didn't bring the community together any stronger. It made it, I think it separated it a little bit. The animosity people see in people taken and not giving back or people in the community not trying to help. You had people that came from different places to help. We had people from all over, they came to help clean up. It wasn't in the community here, it was from out of the community people came to help.

Keep walking along Wolcott for another block. At the corner ahead there are two streets that come together, Dwight and Otsego streets. Turn Left and continue down Dwight Street.

Kristin Eno/Coffey Park

Coming up on your left should be Coffey Park, which is named for Michael J. Coffey, the former state senator, alderman, and district leader representing Red Hook. Coffey was born in 1839 in Ireland and immigrated to the United States with his parents at the age of five. He went to school in Red Hook and soon began working in the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

When the Civil War began, Coffey joined the United States Navy. He served on the gunboat *Monticello*, and quickly earned the respect of his commanding officer. After the war, Coffey returned to Red Hook and became the

Democratic district leader for Red Hook Point. The Red Hook district was locally known as “Coffeyville” by the end of his 39-year tenure as district leader.

In an attempt to remove him from power, the Kings County Democratic General Committee charged him with treason. Coffey successfully fought his case before the Court of Appeals, before going on to pursue a brief career constructing docks. Coffey died after surgical complications at Long Island College Hospital on March 22, 1907.

Artist and filmmaker Kristin Eno has lived next to the park for eight years.

I think the Red Hook neighborhood appealed to Sean and myself because of its remoteness and just the fact that it feels like a little village by the side of the sea. This is very strange in New York City and I think that appealed to us as artists. The open sky and also just the weirdness of the neighborhood. It’s totally different from any neighborhood that we’d ever lived in. It’s not as concentrated. The characters that end up there are just more interesting. It’s just an interesting place to live and to get to know people and to work. There’s a solidarity in Red Hook that might not exist in other neighborhoods.

Eno has been working in the community as an art educator for several years. In particular, she works with the idea of play, often filming the way young children play. Coffey Park has been an important location for that work.

Basically, we tried to do a project where we said it was bringing the outside in and the content of their play was what happens in Coffey Park. So we would take little groups to Coffey Park, which is the main park in the middle of Red Hook. And it was just so interesting to watch the kids play and to show it back to them and to have them narrate it. That’s always what I do, show it back to them and to narrate their stories.

Eno understands that she is a relative newcomer to the neighborhood and has very conflicting views of what gentrification means for her and for the community.

Gentrification is a double-edged sword. We are part of the gentrifiers, but my heart is with, you know, the manufacturing and industrial community having been there for so many years and the livelihood of Red Hook is contingent upon those businesses staying alive, which if the gentrification runs its course than those things will not live. And so I resisted the coming of IKEA, I sort of boycotted it for a couple of years. I didn't do any of the protests; I know some people did. I just didn't shop there and I was sort of sad and angry that it had to come there.

I mean, I was kind of even resistant to Fairway seems to have developed that little pocket, I mean you could say too much but it just furthers the discrepancy of the neighborhood. The fairway apartments are very nice and so you are looking at an income discrepancy between the Red Hook Houses and the folks who live in the Fairway building. It's just a microcosm of the economic injustice, I don't want to say injustice, but the economic disparity in New York.

This disparity keeps several of the communities of Red Hook apart. Eno has noticed divisions particularly between the long-time residents of the waterfront section of the neighborhood and the long-time residents of the Red Hook houses.

...and feeling like there's probably a disconnect or a resistance from one to the other. Because you know, families have been there for 50 odd years plus raising their grandchildren. And then these newfangled types come in and try to change things and how does that affect the people that were already there. That disconnect pains me because I don't feel like I am a part of either one of the communities. I don't feel like my best friends are from this side or that side at all. I don't really identify with either of the communities as anything close to a family. So I kind of feel like an outsider no matter what but maybe that's just my personality.

This is one of the reasons why Eno has been working to start a new program in the neighborhood called Find & Seek. Find & Seek is an experimental play environment where young children take part in self-directed exploration of a wide range of recycled, natural, and open-ended arts materials. Eno and other educators facilitate children's exploration of materials and development of ideas into improvised stories, installations and performances.

But I have taken on, my mission, one of the few, is with children in mind to bridge those the dividing lines, because in various ways we create division in our society and that doesn't help any of us to be better people. So we're not listening to each other if there is a wall between us and there seem to be literal walls in Red hook and those don't need to be there. So that's what we want to do with our little program is bring babies together from the beginning of life. So that that division is a little harder to do. We don't want to divide we want to bring together.

At the intersection at the far edge of the park, turn right onto Verona Street. After a block, make another right onto Columbia Street. After another short block turn left onto West 9th Street and continue walking.

Red Hook Houses

You may have noticed already but we are walking along the Red Hook Houses, the oldest and largest public housing projects in Brooklyn. The Houses were federally funded by the Roosevelt Administration and first opened in 1938. Mayor LaGuardia himself laid the cornerstone.

The location was chosen because it was previously occupied by condemned tenement houses and the Hooverville we talked about earlier full of dockworkers.

A total of 161 houses, which were home to more than 300 families, were demolished, to be replaced by 27 six-story brown brick buildings containing 2,545 apartments. In 1955, three more residential buildings, with 346 apartments, were added.

One of the few marks on the celebrated opening occurred when Delancey Smith, a 71-year-old bricklayer whose home had been razed to make room for the project, approached Mayor LaGuardia and announced: "The hell I wanted to

move. This house was handed down to me by my mother. They clubbed me into selling it.”

The elderly bricklayer was not the only one who objected to the new development. In a 1940 article in *The New Yorker* titled “Versailles for the Millions,” Lewis Mumford criticized what he regarded as the “Leningrad formalism” of Red Hook Houses and dismissed the buildings as “barracklike” and “hygienically undesirable.”

“What is wrong with this design,” Mumford wrote, “is its unnecessary monotony.” Still, the mostly three- and four-room apartments were praised for possessing modern conveniences like electric refrigerators, central heating and gas ranges. And at \$5 or \$6 per room per month, the rent was lower than the rent in private housing in the city.

The Red Hook Houses are also featured in the last chapter, Coda Landsend, of Hubert Selby, Jr.’s classic novel about Brooklyn low life published in 1964, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*.

The welfare checks were cashed and there were long lines outside the Liquor Store across the street from the Project. The owner had his 2 sons and a brother helping him as he did every Saturday night. The store was in the middle of the street and the two lines went out of sight around each corner, and the cop on the beat stood near the entrance so a fight wouldn’t start as people pushed their way into the store. Yet even with the cop there there was much pushing and cursing. The clerks in the store worked as fast as they could and wrapped the bottles quickly, but still the lines were out of sight around both corners. Those at the end of the line would step out occasionally and look to the front wondering how much longer they would have to wait and then finally they would turn the corner and eventually they would come in sight of the lighted window and then they could at least look at all the bottles on display and then the time seemed to pass faster with their goal in sight. Someone tried to get in ahead of time, but

someone else pulled him out of the doorway and an argument started and everyone yelled for them to clear the front of the store so they could get in and the owner came out and frantically yelled at them to stop (the people in the store becoming nervous when the owner left the counter fearing something would happen to prevent them from getting their bottles after having waited on line for so many hours) and finally the cop came over and yanked them both out and told them to beat it. They pleaded to be allowed to get their bottles or at least get on the end of the line (offering the cop money), but the cop refused (not wanting to louse up the beautiful deal he had with the owner) and they finally walked off, sneaking back and giving money to friends to get them a bottle. Before the last customer was taken care of the clerks were soaked with perspiration and completely knocked out, but soon the last few customers were in the store. Many parties had already started and as the last customers bought their bottles and walked happily toward home the bells in a nearby church tolled midnight.

In the late 1970s and through the 1980s, the Red Hook Houses were overrun by drug use and gang violence. Most famously, the project became known as ground zero of the crack epidemic.

The cover story of the July 1988 issue of LIFE Magazine details the lives of several Red Hook Houses residents and their struggle with the drug.

Perhaps the most addictive of all drugs, crack has bred a casual random violence that victimizes nearly all the Hook's residents. Hallways and stairwells brim with dealers and lookouts, many of whom are more heavily armed than the police. The Uzi submachine gun has become the weapon of choice. The major source of arms is a motorcycle gang whose turf includes the project. A .38 sells for \$125, an Uzi for up to \$1,200.

"We are afraid to go out," says one woman. "We don't know one day to the next if we will make it to work or home." Some residents rarely venture from their apartments, fearing they could accidentally walk into a hallway transaction and get shot. Some families carry mace when they take out the garbage; others let it accumulate until they can venture out in a group. But even a locked door is no guarantee of safety. When one resident peered through his peephole to see whether the hallways was safe, a dealer put his gun up to it and fired.

It's a terrifying landscape that the magazine painted.

The neighborhood in general and the Red Hook Houses specifically have changed a lot since the late 1980s, but that article struck a nerve that still hasn't healed. Many in the neighborhood still bring it up and defend the neighborhood against the perception that it is still riddled with drugs and violence.

Drugs and gang violence aren't as prominent in the houses anymore, but their presence is still felt.

Rasheed Johnson is 19 years old and he's lived in the Red Hook Houses for 8 years.

My apartment is a 5 bedroom apartment, which is rare, especially in the projects. It's actually two apartments in one. When you walk in there's the living room, then my mother's room and my little sister's room and the bathroom is right next to my little sister's room and then you have to go around the bend to what my mom calls the dungeon because all of the boys are back there. On the right side of the wall, the first room is my twin brother's room, then if you go all the way back that's my older brother's room. And then next to his on the left is my and my little brother's room. And right across from them is the bathroom. There's not as many people there now as there was when I first moved because people got older and moved out on their own. But its pretty full most of the time.

He expected the neighborhood to be violent and dangerous, because that's what he had heard. But unlike the way the Red Hook Houses have been portrayed in the media, he feels like the community has taken care of him.

People stick up for each other. They have no reason to stick up for me but its because of how the neighborhood is, everybody has to look out for everybody. If there's a problem, we are going to solve it within the neighborhood. When I first came here, I didn't know that rule. When people move out of the neighborhood, once you are in the neighborhood, you are always in the neighborhood. There's always someone who's got your back.

I could always count on my friends to help me keep my priorities straight. That's what I like about Red Hook. No matter what their problem is with you, they'll make sure that you do what you have to in the end. Even people I've fought with, they'll come up to him and check up. Even my enemies look out for him. And I do the same for them.

That doesn't mean that there aren't divisions within the community.

Most people say that the area near Van Brunt is the white part of Red Hook. Then you come towards the front and you see the projects, the drug dealers and all the crackheads. They forget that it's still Red Hook, no matter what we were still isolated from the rest of Brooklyn. We are different from them, that's what everyone in Red Hook has. I studied Red Hook in elementary school. He knows that Red Hook is made of red river clay. I also know that they only made one way to get out of Red Hook. And if it wasn't for Fairway and IKEA, there would still be only one way. Why are we splitting Red Hook apart? But it is what it is.

Red Hook Initiative

Up ahead at the next intersection is our next and final stop, the Red Hook Initiative.

Formed in 2006, the Red Hook Initiative provides long-term programming for youth of all ages. RHI, as it is often referred, believes that if young people feel a sense of belonging, have access to services, are given a chance to develop as leaders, and are provided continual support that they will demonstrate self efficacy, have the courage to take healthy risks, and have a positive sense of self and future.

RHI also believes it is the people from a community who have the power to create their own social change. The organization provides training and employment to people from Red Hook; in turn, residents create programs and provide support services to their neighbors, family, and friends.

Rasheed started working there a few years ago. He's worked his way up to the position of assistant to the executive coordinator. And he's proud of his job. During Hurricane Sandy, the Red Hook Initiative was one of the few places that still had power and wasn't flooded. It became the headquarters for relief efforts in the neighborhood with hundreds volunteering on a daily basis.

For Rasheed, whose apartment was without power for at least a month after the storm, it was one of the only things that kept him going.

Red Hook Initiative got him through the struggles of Hurricane Sandy and has continued to inspire him to do whatever he wants with his life.

I want to open up a non-profit in the future based on art. I want to do that because I couldn't do art when I was growing up. I went through the system wrong, the judge said do parole until you are 18 or do 25 years in jail. I did parole and then my record was expunged. Because I got this second chance I want to give people a chance to express themselves.

Finale

Unfortunately, we've reached the end of our walk through Red Hook together. I hope you have found the neighborhood as fascinating as I do and have enjoyed meeting some of the people who make this neighborhood a vibrant and interesting place.

Like any place in New York City, there are a lot of ups and downs in Red Hook but for the most part it has overcome the destruction that Hurricane Sandy caused and has started planning for what to do when the next storm comes, how the community can work together to make sure everyone is safe and taken care of. Hopefully, they never have to see if their plan works.

In many ways, the process of gentrification has changed many people's perceptions of the neighborhood. Red Hook is no longer thought of as a "cesspool of low life" or the "crack capital of America."

But Red Hook is still a divided community in many ways, and although the disaster of Hurricane Sandy has brought some of these varied groups together, these communities remain distinct, with very different ideas for how they hope to see Red Hook grow and change.

And just because this tour is over, doesn't mean you've seen all there is to see here. Feel free to come back to Red Hook anytime, I only took you to a fraction of the places to visit here and there's plenty more to do.

If you are interested in getting involved in the community in anyway, visit ambiguousborders.org to find a list of organizations in Red Hook that are always looking for new volunteers and participants. And next time you come to IKEA to shop, consider staying a bit longer and visiting some of the local businesses in the area.

Route Map



Methodology

Red Hook is a fascinating place with a unique and multi-faceted history, which in many ways reflects some of the important aspects of the history of the city as a whole. However, the neighborhood has often been misrepresented by the media in ways that make it seem one-dimensional.

I feel that oral history is an important way of counteracting some of those misrepresentations and misconceptions, particularly in an neighborhood like Red Hook, which, after Hurricane Sandy, suddenly had to deal with intense media representations of how the neighborhood was handling the destruction left by the storm.

The oral histories I collected with residents of Red Hook, break apart many of these misconceptions that the media and even the neighborhood itself has perpetuated about Red Hook in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. It is not one, unified effort to rebuild; it did not affect everyone equally; a year and a half later there are still a lot of repairs to be done.

But I felt that the oral histories alone were not quite enough. This project is about the neighborhood of Red Hook as a whole and I felt that the physical location was important to this story as well. To truly understand the stories that my narrators tell, you have to have experienced the uniqueness of Red Hook itself.

I considered several different ways of incorporating the physical location of Red Hook into my work, including mapping and a location-based exhibit. However, I settled on creating an audio walking tour for several reasons.

First, I wanted those encountering my work and the stories of my narrators within context. Recreating the actual interview scene or events recounted in the interview would be nearly impossible, but I felt that listeners should have a chance to understand where each narrator is located within the neighborhood and how their surroundings might affect their stories.

Second, I felt that one of most important ideas I wanted to convey was the fact that Red Hook is not one uniform place where everything looks similar. Although it is a very small neighborhood in terms of both physical size and population density, there are distinct sections of the neighborhood that differ greatly from other parts of Red Hook. I felt that the only way this could be properly conveyed would be by having participants actually walk through the neighborhood.

Third, I chose an audio walking tour over guided tours, which I am more acquainted with through my work as a tour guide, because I wanted those encountering my work to hear the actual voices of my narrators in their own words. This is difficult to do in a guided tour setting. I also wanted to give participants a chance to explore on their own and experience the neighborhood in their own way without someone leading them around.

In creating this audio walking tour, I was inspired by the work of several oral historians, audio producers, and philosophers. I was particularly inspired by the work of Toby Butler and his audio walks incorporating oral histories along the Thames River in London. In an essay about the walks he created, Butler states, "The senses are constantly interacting with the environment in a way that cannot work if you listen to the recordings at home, because what you are listening to and what you are experiencing in the same moment are inextricably linked. Without the juxtaposition of the present of place, the memories would have seemed flatter, one-dimensional, and sometimes sentimental."¹ It is exactly this flat, one-dimensional kind of memory I wish to avoid.

I was also inspired by Steven High's work with soundwalks, which he discusses at length in his paper, "Embodied Ways of Listening." In particular, he states, "Memory-based audio walks are by their nature Brechtian, as participants are not so much immersed in another world as they are confronted by two worlds experienced at once. The notion of augmented reality fails to communicate the resulting temporal and spatial friction between past and present, here and there. In my view, this tension is integral to the experience."² I am particularly interested in creating this tension that High speaks of and hope that it is apparent in the way I have structured my audio walk.

¹ Toby Butler, "The Historical Hearing Aid: Located Oral History from the Listener's Perspective," in *Place, Writing, and Voice in Oral History*, ed. Shelley Trower (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 209.

² Steven High, "Embodied Ways of Listening: Oral History, Genocide, and the Audio Tour." *Anthropologica*, 2013.

High also says, "An audio walk is an extended period of directed or intentional listening. Everyday landscapes are experienced in new ways, augmented not only by the stories we are hearing but by the experience of the audio walk itself. The physical act of walking invites us to merge our own experiences and narratives with those of the stories playing on our headphones."³ I think this idea of intentional listening is important and I believe that the audio walk is particularly effective way of encouraging it. Participants following along on the audio tour must listen to what is being said more intentionally because it is this audio that is leading them on their walk.

I was also inspired by the work of Michel de Certeau and his book, *The Practice of Everyday Life*. He devotes an entire chapter to the practice of walking and how it affects the way we see things and the stories we tell, as well as the association between walking and memory. "Stories diversify, rumors totalize. If there is still a certain oscillation between them, it seems that today there is rather a stratification: stories are becoming private and sink into the secluded places in neighborhoods, families, or individuals, while the rumors propagated by the media cover everything and, gathered under the figure of the City, the masterword of an anonymous law, the substitute for all proper names, they wipe out or combat any superstitions guilty of still resisting the figure."⁴ I hope that my audio walk allows the stories of secluded places to be heard.

³ Ibid

⁴ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 1984), 108.

I have also considered the neighborhood itself as a sort of living archive for the stories I have collected and have thought of my audio walk as a tour through this archive. In his article on redefining the archive, Mike Featherstone also considers the role of the urban community a archive, "Hence Walter Benjamin (2000) focused on the fragments, the bric-a-brac and detritus of modern urban life which could all effectively be seen as recording devices for broken and incomplete memory traces. For Benjamin the city was an archive, an archive already in ruins, in which the minutiae of everyday life (the decorations on buildings, ironwork, street signs, advertising bills, posters, window displays, etc.) all have the capacity to speak. Yet these fragments could only speak the language of broken, incomplete allegories, summoning up half-formed memories which appeared vividly as in a lightening flash and then were gone."⁵

He continues with this thought and uses the idea of the "flâneur" in the context of the archive, "Here we think of the flâneur who wanders the archival textual city in a half-dreamlike state in order to be open to the half-formed possibilities of the material and sensitive to unusual juxtapositions and novel perceptions."⁶ Through this audio walk of Red Hook, I would like to turn my participants into flâneurs of a sort, exploring the physical and living archive of the neighborhood and hearing the stories it keeps within.

⁵ Mike Featherstone, "Archive." *Theory, Culture & Society*, 2006.

⁶ Ibid.

As I built the audio walk, I thought very carefully about the logistics of the tour and how to create the best experience for participants while also considering my narrators and the content I hoped to convey.

The tour begins at the Red Hook Recreation Center and Pool. I have chosen this as a starting point for several reasons. First, it is a central and well-known point within the neighborhood, easily accessible by public transportation and easy to gain directions to if a participant has trouble locating it. Second, it has public restrooms available for use and the front steps are convenient for seating. The tour will have several stops along the way, but I think it is important to give participants an opportunity to be comfortable from the beginning. Third, the building itself has an interesting history that I think can give participants a sense of the neighborhood and what the tour will be discussing over the course of the walk.

There are a total of 13 stops along the tour which travels about 2 miles and takes about an hour and 45 minutes. Because the tour is so long, participants are encouraged to stop regularly at different locations and take a break or spend some time on their own to learn more about the places visited. It is also recommended that participants take the tour on a Saturday between April and October. The tour can be experienced at any time, but for participants to be able to visit and experience everything the tour recommends, Saturdays in the summer are ideal.

The second stop is in Red Hook park where the Red Hook Latin American Food Vendors set up on weekends in the summer, serving food for soccer fans and anyone who passes through the park. Participants get to hear segments from oral histories collected with several of the vendors and are encouraged to pause the audio and order food if they are hungry.

The next segment of the tour isn't a stop but is a discussion of the waterfront history of the neighborhood as participants walk through the park along the waterfront. This section uses historical and literary sources as well as an interview with a man who grew up in the neighborhood in the 1950s, in order to give participants context for understanding how the neighborhood was perceived by others throughout history.

The next stop is IKEA, where participants learn about IKEA coming to the neighborhood in the mid-2000s, how the neighborhood reacted, how the store has affected the neighborhood since, and the way that IKEA has changed the waterfront landscape.

Participants continue walking over to Van Brunt Street where they learn about the historic Civil War-era warehouses that have been renovated and turned into commercial and artist space. Participants hear from an interview with the former executive director of the Brooklyn Waterfront Artists Coalition and are encouraged to enter their gallery space if it is open.

Participants then walk along the waterfront over to Sunny's Bar where they learn a little bit about the history of the bar and its eccentric owner.

Participants are encouraged to stop there for a break if they need one and the bar is open.

The next stop is just around the corner at the Waterfront Barge Museum. Participants hear about the history of the barge and from an interview with the owner and executive director of the museum about how they weathered Hurricane Sandy. If the Barge Museum is open, participants are encouraged to go inside and talk to David Sharps himself, as he is happy to give visitors a tour of the space.

Participants continue walking along the waterfront over to Steve's Authentic Key Lime Pies, where they hear from the owner, Steve Tarpin, about his shop and how Hurricane Sandy had a huge impact on his business.

Participants are encouraged to buy a individual sized key lime pie if they are hungry and then directed onto the pier at Valentino Park, where they get to see beautiful views of the harbor and the Statue of Liberty and learn about the important role the neighborhood played in the Revolutionary War.

Participants walk back over to Van Brunt Street to talk about the recent gentrification of the neighborhood and look at some of the visual cues of change along Van Brunt Street.

Then participants turn on Wolcott Street and walk past P.S. 15, which is named after former principal Patrick F. Daly, who was killed in a gunfight between feuding gangs while looking for a child who had left school. They then hear from Morris Johnson, a longtime resident of the neighborhood who

remembers the shooting and the reactions to it. He also talks about what he saw happen to the neighborhood in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy.

Participants then turn up Dwight Street and walk past Coffey Park, hearing from Kristin Eno, a relative newcomer to Red Hook, who has very conflicting feelings about the fact that she is a gentrifier and her presence signifies a change in the neighborhood.

Participants will then turn on West 9th Street and walk through the Red Hook Houses, learning about their history and importance. The decline of the neighborhood and the perceptions of the housing project being a hotbed for gang and drug violence will also be discussed, with historic and literary references being included. Participants also hear from a young resident of the projects named Rasheed, who talks about his current experience living in the Red Hook Houses and about the divides he sees in the neighborhood.

The tour ends at the Red Hook Initiative, where the tour talks about some of the social programs that are now in place in the neighborhood. Because this is the last stop on the tour, the tour also wraps up loose ends and encourages participants to continue exploring the neighborhood.

There will also be a space at the Red Hook Initiative for people to leave comments or feedback about their experience on the tour and they will be encouraged to do so.

This tour is primarily meant for people coming into the neighborhood from other places, primarily people coming from other parts of New York City

who want to know more about the neighborhood. I am the narrator and guide of the tour. I made this decision because I wanted to be a bridge between the outsiders coming in and the people of the neighborhood that I have met over the course of my fieldwork.

The tour will be available in mp3 format that can be downloaded from the tour website onto any device that plays mp3s, including iPods and cell phones. I want the audio to be easily accessible for anyone to experience. I also want the tour to be accessible for both those traveling alone and those experiencing the neighborhood as a group. Although participants will be listening individually on their own devices and headphones, the locations where the tour encourages people to pause the audio and explore on their own are all great spots to experience in a group setting.

The purpose of the tour is for visitors to see the neighborhood through many different perspectives and to be able to think about how everyone experiences the neighborhood in their own way by including segments of oral history interviews with a range of different voices and perspectives, as well as historical and literary perspectives of the neighborhood.

I have been thinking a lot about what makes a good audio tour and I think the one of the most important characteristics for me is for participants to feel like they have agency. I want people participating in this tour to feel like they can stop the audio at any time and experience the neighborhood in their own way if they like, but to also provide them with context and a variety of perspectives with

which to view the neighborhood. I think that including both oral history interviews and more traditional historical and literary sources helps to achieve that, as well as giving participants space and permission to have their own experiences.

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Interviews

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Cesar Fuentes, interviewed on October 5th, 2013.

Richard Gambino, interviewed on December 17th, 2013.

Morris Johnson, interviewed on March 31st, 2014.

Rasheed Johnson, interviewed on November 19th, 2013.

Marcos Lainez, interviewed on October 12th, 2013.

Eleazar Perez, interviewed on October 12th, 2013.

Mary Ann Pietanza, interviewed on April 18th, 2014.

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