



Star-Revue photo by Elizabeth Graham

**While the Knicks struggle in the post-season, two aspiring Red Hook youths emulate their heroes in Bush/Clinton Park.**

## The Star-Revue Gumshoe Reporters Visit the Waterfront Museum

By: Jaquan Dure, Cheyenne Lanae Roberts, Kashief Scott and Jaylene Torrellas

The article below was written by four students at Patrick Daly School P.S. 15 under the guidance of myself and 4th grade teacher, Livia Pantuliano. While Ms. Pantuliano and I directed these kids at every step in the process, it was they who picked the topic, did the research, asked the questions, picked which quotes to use and how to present the story. They collaborated on every sentence, looking for the best words and the best ways to organize the material, and of course wrote the lead. It was a gradual and sometimes painful process, as writing often is, but I imagine it was a nice break from the relentless test-prepping which takes up so much of their class time these days, and which passionate teachers like Ms. Pantuliano have to reluctantly subject them to. The good news is that they have plenty of energy and creativity to go around. Enjoy. - Matt Graber

David Sharps takes care of his boat as if it was his own child. But the funny thing is, his boat is almost twice as old as him.

Before Sharps, President of the Waterfront Museum, bought his own barge, he was a professional juggler. He also did shows on cruise ships. "I liked it," he said. "But after a couple of years I started thinking about doing something different."

Then he moved to Paris to study, where he was a caretaker of a friend's boat. He thought it was enjoyable. After he finished his studies, he came back to the United States, and bought his own boat - a barge called the Le-high Valley #79 - for a dollar.

"When I got this boat, it was full of mud," he said. "Eight feet of mud was down at the bottom of the boat. It hadn't floated in seven years."

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Naureen Rashid of the Justice Center announcing the meeting last month at the 76th Precinct Community Council meeting attended by many members of Occupy Red Hook.

## Justice Center Meeting Abruptly Cancelled

by Matt Graber

The new 76th Precinct Commanding Officer Jeffrey Schiff wasn't keen on the idea of his first public meeting with the Red Hook community devolving into an anti-stop-and-frisk demonstration.

Nor were the other organizers of the public education workshop, which had been designed to be a next step in the continuing dialogue between local police and residents over practices such as - but not limited to - the stop-and-frisk.

The workshop was initiated by the Red Hook Community Justice Center and the Red Hook Civic Association, and scheduled to take place in the P.S.15 auditorium on the evening April 25th. It was abruptly cancelled that same day. The cancellation came as the result of an email circulated by an affiliate of Occupy Red Hook, which suggested that the meeting could wind up looking more like a protest.

In the email, the meeting is framed as being about "stopping-stop and frisk, police brutality and other related issues." It was sent to other Occupy groups and organizations, calling for as many people as possible to "attend in solidarity."

But that wasn't what the 76th Precinct or any of the other facilitators had signed up for.

Naureen Rashid, Director of Court Operations at the Justice Center, announced the time and place of the upcoming workshop during the 76th Precinct Community Council meeting in early April. In her announcement, Rashid mentioned that a speaker from the New York Civil Liberties Union would attend to talk about the rights of citizens when stopped by the police, with advice on how to conduct yourself when stopped. These kinds of training sessions are becoming increasingly common throughout the city as stop-and-frisks rise in volume each year.

**Planned meeting was supposed to help our police work closer with the community**

"The idea of these workshops is one step of many to get police and courts together with the community and work some of these things out," said Community Affairs Detective Paul Grudzinski at the council meeting. It was the second meeting in a row in which Occupy Red Hook came in numbers to confront the police about alleged patterns of misconduct.

In the March meeting, Captain Lewis was more empathetic to the many stories that were told of disrespectful treatment, and sometimes illegal actions taken by officers of the 76th Precinct.

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Nydia faces real challenge in June primary

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# Bushwick City Councilman Erik Dilan will give Nydia Velazquez a real primary challenge June 26th

by Curtis Skinner

Money and race promise to be two dominant themes in Red Hook Representative Nydia Velazquez's upcoming reelection battle for New York's 12<sup>th</sup> Congressional District—likely to be the toughest in her 20-year career in the House of Representatives.

Puerto Rican City Councilmember Erik Martin Dilan, (D—Bushwick), announced his bid for the seat against the 10-term Puerto Rican Congresswoman in March and has begun setting up his campaign's infrastructure for the June primaries. According to 2010 Census data, about half of the district's 672,000 residents identify as Hispanic or Latino, and a quarter of the population listed themselves as Puerto Rican. The gloves were quick to come off in an interview with Dilan's campaign manager, Michael Olmeda. "She is supposed to be a flag-bearer for the Latino community," Olmeda said over the phone. "[But] many people were complaining that they felt disenfranchised and that there's no connection with their congressional representative." That said Velazquez has strong ties to Hispanic groups in both Brooklyn and Capitol Hill. She chairs the House Hispanic Caucus and shares a long history with the Latino community organization, *Make the Road New York*, and the Brooklyn Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to name a couple.

Dilan is no neophyte politician—he has represented the 37<sup>th</sup> City Council district for a decade—but Velazquez's nearly quarter century in national office has secured her plenty of donors. So far, Dilan has raised more than all of Velazquez's opponents for the past 10 years combined, according to data provided on OpenSecrets.org. But that sum of \$132,000 is still dwarfed by the

In response, a spokesperson for Velazquez's office said, "Many of the contributions come from working families and entrepreneurs who have limited resources and choose to show their support through their union or small business organizations."

Though it should be noted that her positions on both the financial services

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\$300,000 Velazquez has raised for this election—let alone the nearly three quarters of a million dollars sitting in her campaign coffers.

In the face of such a stark disadvantage, Olmeda said that totals weren't as important as the sources.

"All of her contributions are from '1-percenters,'" Olmeda said. According to campaign finance data, 9 out of every 10 dollars raised by the Velazquez campaign came from political action committees—large and well-funded political interest groups and unions—whereas Dilan received almost all of his funds from individual contributions.

and small businesses committees have attracted financial giants like Goldman Sachs, Bank of America and American Express to contribute large sums of money through their respective PACs.

Not only does Velazquez enjoy an appreciable financial lead, but considerable political clout as well. A spokesperson from Velazquez's press office rattled off a list of her endorsements in an email: Coalition for a District Alternative; Central Brooklyn Independent Democrats; Working Families Party; New Kings Democrats and the Independent Neighborhood Democrats.

Dilan has ties to Brooklyn power-broker Vito Lopez and can expect support from



Nydia Velazquez speaking to reporters last December about the B61 bus.

his father, State Senator Martin Dilan (D—Bushwick), who represented the 37<sup>th</sup> district until he left to run for the state senate. But Dilan has a long way to go before the June primary.

"The difference between her and him being on a national level is she brings Washington to the community," said Dilan's campaign manager Michael Olmeda. "Whereas Erik would bring the community to Washington."

## Occupy Red Hook email causes cancellation of Justice Center public meeting at PS 15

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But many of the complaints brought to the captain in April were about city-wide policies, such as stop-and-frisks and bike safety laws, which local police have no control over.

Jessica Colon, Deputy Project Director at the Justice Center, cited these issues when explaining the cancellation of the workshop. "Nothing would have been accomplished," she said. "The point of the meeting was not to discuss policy, but to discuss procedure." She went on to add that the email inviting outside groups "gave a different vibe and agenda" than the original understanding that everyone had of what the workshop was supposed to be.

Many Occupy Red Hook activists expressed doubts about the workshop upon learning about it, especially after the April Community Council meeting, where many felt that their concerns about police misconduct were not taken seriously by then-Captain John Lewis.

The day after the workshop was cancelled, Detective Grudzinski maintained that the decision was mutual among the event's facilitators, including the Justice Center and the Civic Association. "The parameters of the meeting had been discussed and agreed upon prior," Grudzinski said. "We all



A scene from the April meeting of the 76th Precinct Community Council. A majority of the attendees that night were members of the Occupy Red Hook group.

agreed on the forum and that [having outside groups come in] would change the direction of the forum."

Occupy Red Hook met at their usual location at Added Value after word got around that the meeting was cancelled. During general assembly, the gentleman responsible for the email apologized, and everyone seemed to agree on establishing more of a group consensus before emails or any communication on behalf of Occupy Red Hook goes out in the future.

The workshop would have been the first contact between the 76th Pre-

dict's new C.O. and the community in a public venue. Captain Schiff started his post in Red Hook in mid-April, when John Lewis was reassigned to Crown Heights. (The NYPD has a policy of keeping C.O.s in one precinct for 18-24 months at a time.)

According to Detective Grudzinski, Captain Schiff is still willing to meet with the community to discuss local issues, but not to engage in a tit-for-tat over city policy. Schiff may have been instructed from his superiors to call the meeting off when it began to look like a demonstration, as the issue of stop-and-

**"Many Occupy Red Hook activists expressed doubts about the workshop, especially after the April Community Council meeting, where many felt that their concerns about police misconduct were not taken seriously by then-Captain John Lewis."**

frisks has been heating up throughout the city.

As this article is being written, demonstrators are getting ready to make a strong statement on Monday, April 30th, when 20 people who were arrested in October for demonstrating in Harlem's 28th Precinct against stop-and-frisks will be brought to trial at Manhattan Criminal Court.

(The 76th Precinct Community Council meeting is held on the first Tuesday of every month at the station house on Union Street between Hicks and Henry Street. This month's meeting fell on May 1st, so if you are reading this, you probably missed it. Look out for our coverage in the mid-May issue of the Star-Revue.)

# The Star-Revue Gumshoe Reporters Visit the Waterfront Museum

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He didn't have any experience with boats or even with power tools. But that didn't stop him from putting up his museum.

He cleaned out his barge and then filled a section of it with furniture. He moved in with his family and started collecting old tools and treasures. He began to put on shows because it was "a chance to have my own venue: a museum by day and a show boat by night," he said. "That way I could combine my love of history with my love of the arts."

David Sharps bought the Lehigh Valley #79 in 1985. The barge was docked in New Jersey. He was 27 at that time, and was struggling to find a place that was willing to let him have his programs. "Some places love to have programs in the summertime, but then when it got to be winter, they'd say 'Hey, you're not doing programs. We need you to go away.' And my only problem was – where?"

Sharps found himself in a difficult, "precarious, tenuous, shifty" situation where he didn't have a place to put his boat.

In 1994, Sharps found an available space on a dock near the present location of Fairway in Red Hook. The O'Connell Organization let him stay. After years of searching for a home for his barge, Sharps found a perfect spot to start a new chapter in his life.

## Our Visit

On March 1st, we went to the Lehigh Valley #79 and we interviewed Sharps. When we met him on the gangway, one of us noticed long pieces of wood with black rubbery wheel-shaped objects attached to them, and asked, "What are these things that look like tires?" He described that the "fenders" protect boats from bumping into the docks. When we entered the barge, we

discovered all the tools and treasures that he had inside. Hanging from the ceiling there was a 12-foot spoon. We saw miniature models of boats and barges. Sharps showed us all of these different types of tools that he had in his barge, including three pieces of wood that looked like baseball bats and they were called "fids," used for unraveling three strong strands of rope. He also showed us different knots, including the "granny knot." After that we all tried and made a granny knot out of two lines of rope. "It's very important to be able to untie a knot easily," he said. "Especially in cold weather."

Do you know what "batten down the hatches" means? It means to tie down a

**"In 1994, Sharps found an available space on a dock near the present location of Fairway in Red Hook. The O'Connell Organization let him stay. After years of searching for a home for his barge, Sharps found a perfect spot to start a new chapter in his life. "**

bundle of cargo to the wall on the inside of a boat so the cargo does not fall off or move. According to Chambers Concise Dictionary, a batten is "a piece of sawn timber" used to "fasten down hatches on ships."

"The big cargo door along the side of the boat slides opened and closed," Sharps said. "If you had a big bundle you could swing it in. And you could batten down the cargo and take big rope and tie it to



The Gumshoe Reporters, Kashief Scott, Cheyenne Lanae Roberts, Jaylene Torrellas and Jaquan Dure with David Sharp outside his Waterfront Museum, across from Fairway.

the wall so it doesn't shift around. That's why they say 'Batten down the hatches!'"

We were observing the inside of the barge, and one of us noticed a long, 12-foot wooden stick and asked what it was. Sharps said it was a "Mark Twain stick." He told us about Mark Twain, who wrote the book, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer." Back when Twain was a young man, his name was Samuel Clemons. His job was to measure in fathoms how deep the water was in the Mississippi River. A fathom is six feet, and there are two fathoms in one Mark Twain stick. The meaning of "Mark Twain" was to measure two fathoms. His boss used to call out, "Mark Twain!" and it inspired him to change his name. David Sharps' friend, Captain Pam, takes David with his barge to where he needs to go. The barge does not have a motor because a motor would be too big

to fit in the barge. So the barge moves by Captain Pam coming to tug the boat with her tugboat, Tug Pegasis.

During Hurricane Irene, David Sharps stayed on the barge while his family left the boat and went somewhere safer. "The water came way up the rock and the boat was way up high," he said.

His original opinion was that "the best thing to do is not have a boat. It is to have a friend with a boat." Today his opinion is that having his own barge is a good thing because he can do his own thing.

When Mr. Sharps started his programs, it was hard for him to raise money. Then he was determined and persevered and said: "You know what happens in the early days? You have an idea, and you're so sure that it's a good idea that you're willing to say, 'You know what? I'm going to put my money in it. I'm going to make this work.'"

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