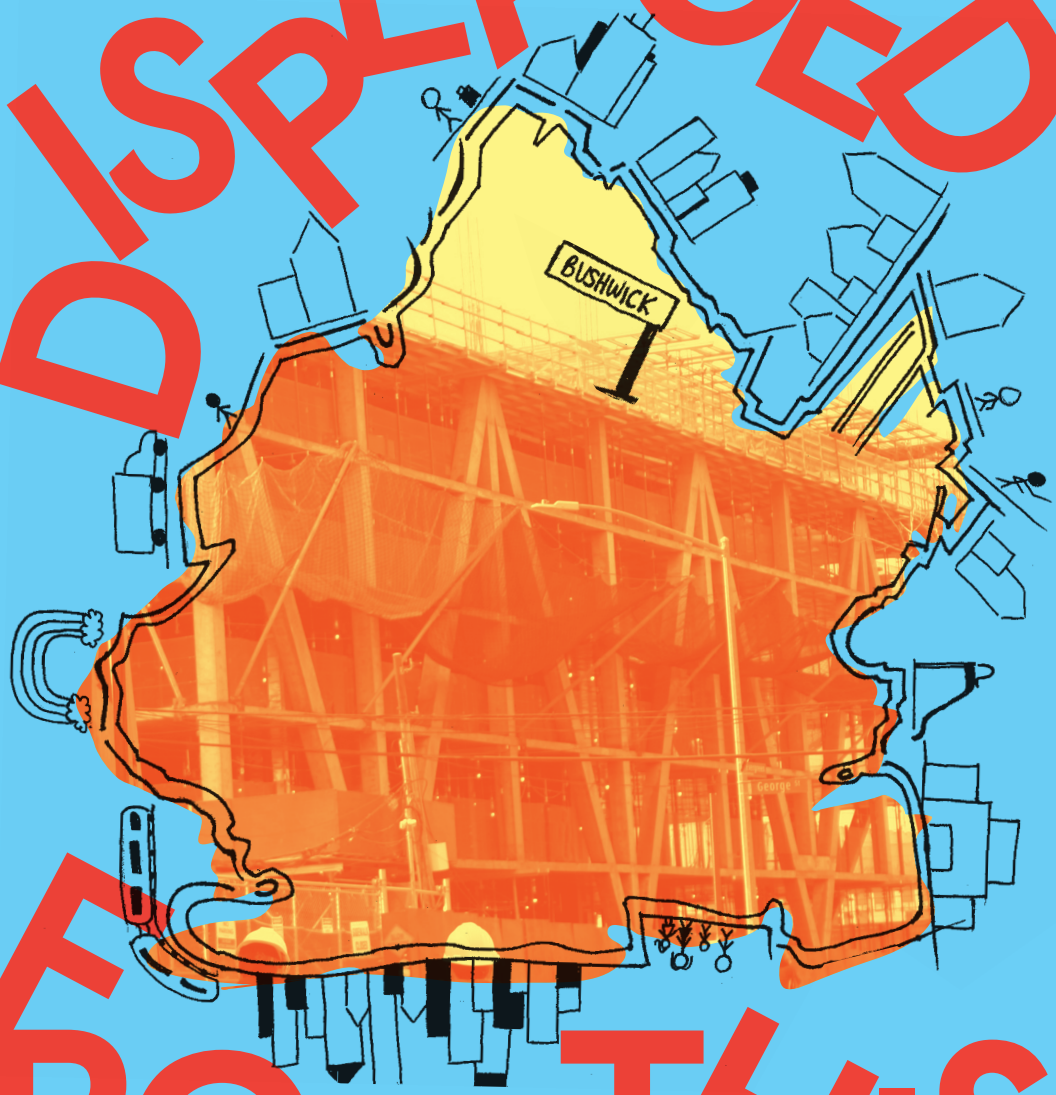


DISPLACED



FROM THIS PLACE?

**Bushwick**, like many New York City neighborhoods, is changing. Between 1990 and 2014, rents in Bushwick rose 44%—twice as much as the citywide average! From bodega to bus stop, people are talking about displacement.

What is displacement and how does it happen?  
Why Bushwick and what can we do about it?

CUP collaborated with public high school students from EBC High School for Public Service to delve into displacement. Students hit the streets to survey Bushwick residents, speak with community organizers, interview elected officials and policy experts, and dive deep into the issue. The crew gathered what they learned and teamed up with designer Kyle Richardson to create this booklet that details what they learned about displacement.

# What is displacement?

*Displacement is an unwanted or forced move from a neighborhood that you call home.*

—ANTONIO REYNOSO, City Council Member for District 34

People can get displaced for lots of different reasons in many different ways. For example, people may have to move because of a natural disaster. Today in Bushwick, when we talk about displacement we are talking about people who are forced to leave their homes because they can no longer afford to live there.

*On my block and in my building, I know about a lot of families that had to move away.*

—CHRISTOPHER GARCIA,  
EBC High School student  
and Bushwick resident.

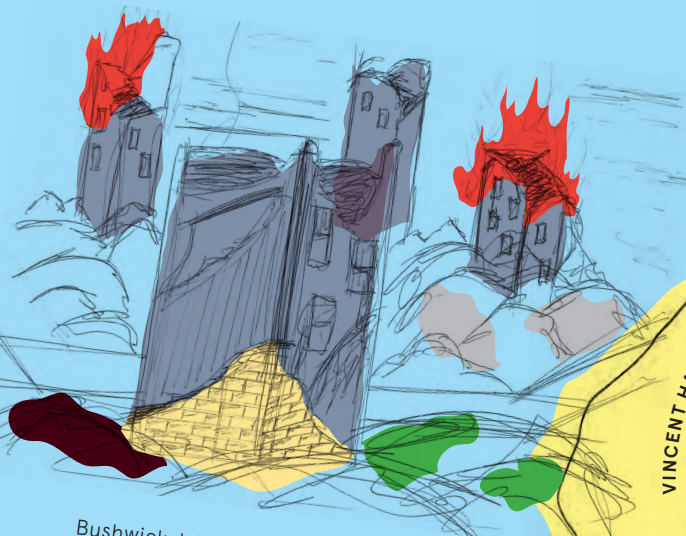




# Displacement is **not new** to Bushwick.

*[In] the 1970's and 80's when the city was in a fiscal crisis, landlords were not investing in their buildings and they were abandoning their buildings and that can also lead to displacement. If your building is falling apart around you, people are also being displaced.*

–**JESSICA YAGER**, Executive Director of the NYU Furman Center



Bushwick, late 1970's

*As more minorities started to move into this community ... the landlords became disenchanted with the financial situation [and] let things go. Then the 'fire out'—things started to burn ... People started moving away. They started tearing down destroyed homes ... There were empty lots for blocks around.*

–**VINCENT HALL, JR.**, Community Organizer with EBC and Bushwick resident since 1963



BUSHWICK

In the late 1970's, Vincent joined East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC) – a multi-faith community organization. For decades, Vincent, EBC, and many others worked to change the neighborhood by building safe, affordable housing, refurbishing parks, and opening new schools.



**VINCENT:**

*There was a vibrant community of survivors. There were people who stayed here that didn't get pushed out – who didn't run away.*

*Now there are different groups of folks moving into this community. Mostly Caucasian, mostly young, not families ... I don't fault them for coming in because I happen to love this community, and always have, and I'm not planning on going anywhere anytime soon.*



Bushwick today

**But how and why displacement happens today differs from the past.**



# What **causes** displacement?

Why are people being forced out of their homes these days?

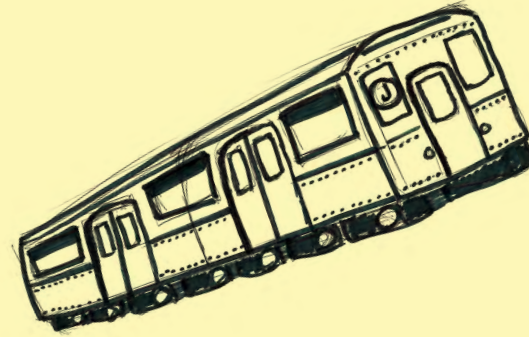
**JESSICA:** *The way that displacement is happening in New York City today is that there's a tremendous demand for living in the city and there's not enough housing and so rents are really high ... Rent rises quickly and then landlords have a big incentive to get people in who can pay these higher rents and so lower income people get pushed out of the neighborhood.*

Why are there more people to demand more housing?

**JESSICA:** *More and more people [are] coming into cities, people are staying in cities longer, people are waiting to get married and when they do get married they're staying in cities. There's just a lot of people who want to be in cities and not enough housing for them.*



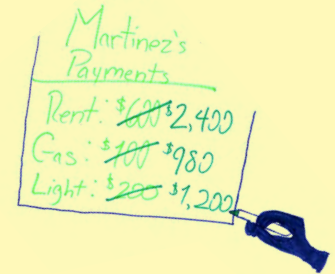
JESSICA YAGER



**JESSICA:** *When you have a situation where you have a lot of low-income people in a neighborhood and the rents start rising really quickly, it's not surprising that you might see displacement.*

Why is this happening in Bushwick?

**ANTONIO:** *Displacement is not unique to Bushwick. Displacement mostly targets poorer, black and brown neighborhoods near transportation hubs. People that have money want access to transportation, they don't want to have to take two buses to a train, they want to be able to get right on the train.*



So it's just a simple case of supply and demand?

*I don't think this neighborhood would be attractive for people to move in were it not for the work of Mr. Hall, EBC, St. Barbra's, EBC High School, and so many of the long term residents ... If the neighbors hadn't worked to turn these neighborhoods around, they wouldn't be attractive to wealthier people that are now moving in. -MATTHEW MARIENTHAL, Organizer at EBC*



MATTHEW MARIENTHAL

# What is **gentrification**?

Does it just come down to lots of people and not enough housing?

**ANTONIO:** *I want to be clear—gentrification is what led us to the displacement. New people looking to come in, and that demand for homes, are raising prices and displacing people.*

**JESSICA:** *[In our most recent study] we looked at neighborhoods that were low income in terms of who was living there in 1990, and then saw rapid rent increases since then. In terms of those neighborhoods, Bushwick had the fourth highest rent increase [between 1990 and 2014].*

What's race got to do with it? Are white people to blame?

**JESSICA:** *I personally would not blame these young white people who are moving into the neighborhoods because I think even if that person didn't move in there would be other people right behind them who would move in. I think these are larger forces.*

**ANTONIO:** *Gentrification is not necessarily a race thing. It's not white people moving into a community. It's people with money moving into a community. Unfortunately, people with money are mostly white [in New York City].*



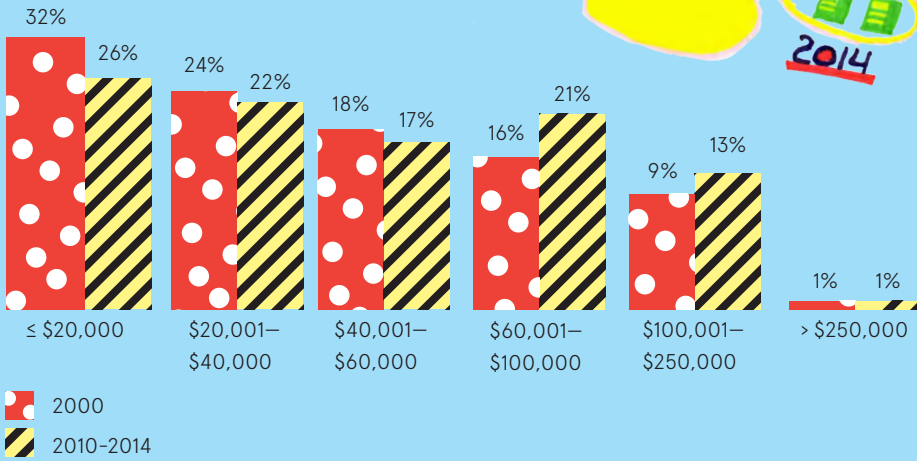
ANTONIO REYNOSO



# The data on displacement

## Household Income Distribution in Bushwick 2000 vs. 2014\*

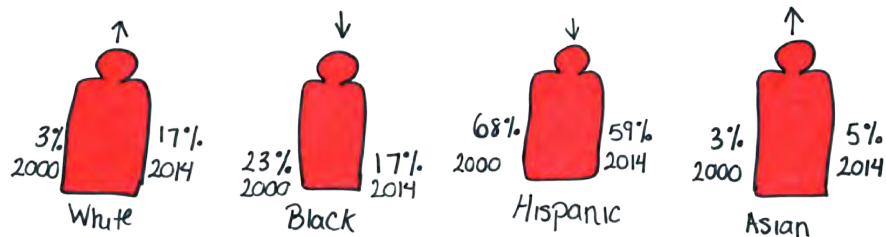
From 2000 to 2014 in Bushwick, the number of lower-income households decreased while the number of high-income homes increased.



## Change in Racial and Ethnic Makeup in Bushwick from 2000 to 2014\*

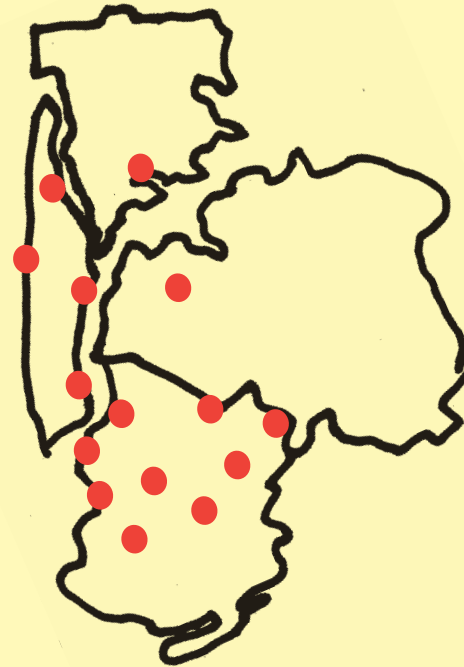
JESSICA: We did see that neighborhoods that were gentrifying became more white and less black. And that's at the same time that the city was becoming much less white overall.

ANTONIO: [We] actually saw over 15,000 Latinos get displaced ... since 2000.



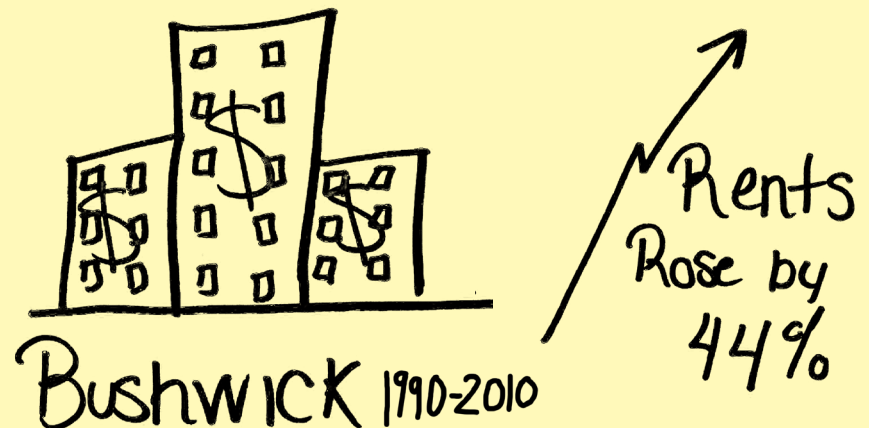
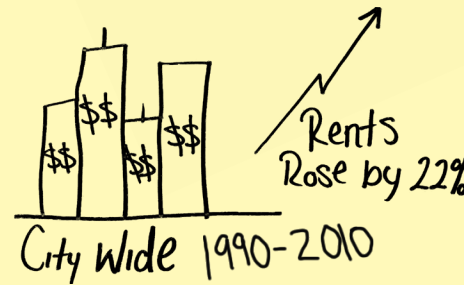
\*Data based on State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods in 2015 (NYU Furman Center)

## Gentrifying Neighborhoods in NYC



ANTONIO: Williamsburg is one hub, you're seeing it happen in Sunset Park, Red Hook, East New York, Cypress Hills, Crown Heights, East Flatbush, and those types of areas in Brooklyn. It's also happening in Manhattan, in Inwood, in Washington Heights, in the South Bronx, which also has good transportation access.

According to the NYU Furman Center\* other gentrifying neighborhoods were: Central Harlem, Lower East Side/Chinatown, East Harlem, Morningside Heights/Hamilton Heights, Bedford Stuyvesant, Astoria, and Brownsville/Ocean Hill



JESSICA: The rent in Bushwick went up 44% between 1990 and 2010 ... Citywide during that time rent went up 22%. So Bushwick rent was going up twice as much as it did citywide.

# What does displacement look like?

## Illegal Landlord Harassment

ANTONIO:

*The most common way the people are being displaced from Bushwick right now is harassment through construction.*

*So what's happening is that Doña Conchita is in building 1A and she's protected by rent stabilization so she can stay there and she doesn't need to worry. The landlord wants to get her out so they can turn it into a market rate apartment which will allow them to charge more rent. So they start doing construction work while she's still in the building, they start gutting walls, making a lot of noise, the dust is all over the place, people walking in and out, she can't sleep. They make it as uncomfortable as possible for her, so much so that she feels like she needs to leave because she can't live with that any longer.*

DOÑA CONCHITA



**Rent Stabilization:** limits how much rents can be raised each year (usually a small amount, like 1%-2%)

**Market Rate:** apartments that have no limit to how much rent can be charged

JESSICA: *I think [landlord harassment of tenants] is a symptom of the housing market and obviously people who are willing to break the law ... I think the reason landlords are harassing tenants is because there's an incentive for them to do so.*

## New, Big Apartment Buildings

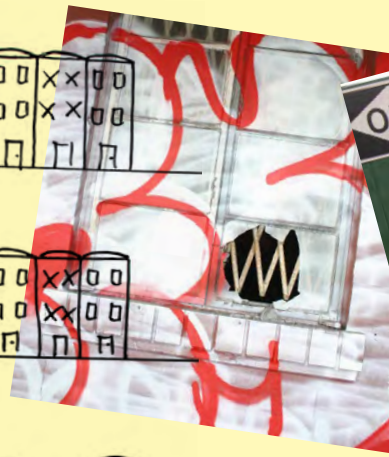
Sometimes people get displaced because the landlord that owns the building sells the property.



FOR SALE

VINCENT: *[Developers] tear down a one family, 3-story house and put up a 4-5 story building, with probably double the apartments, and probably triple the rent.*

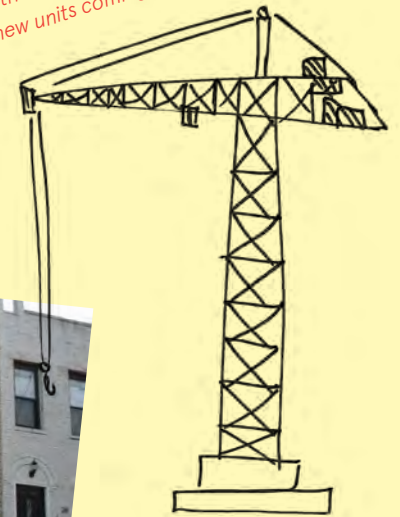
JESSICA: *As neighborhoods become more popular, there is an economic incentive for developers to build bigger buildings.*



ONE WAY

SLOW WORK ZONE

JESSICA: *Gentrifying neighborhoods saw the biggest increase in the rate of new units coming online.*





# Who is most at risk?

Everybody needs housing. But does everybody share the same risk of being displaced?

## Undocumented Immigrants

**MATTHEW:** *[I've heard reports of landlords [that] say, 'If you're undocumented, I'm gonna report you to ICE and intimidate you to get you out of the building.' That's totally illegal!]*

## Low-Income People of Color

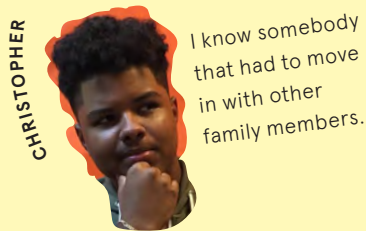
**ANTONIO:** *Unfortunately in this city, being poor doesn't mean you're black or brown, but being black or brown usually means you're poor. In this district, most people are below the poverty line. Across the city of New York, wherever there's people of color you're probably going to have the lowest income.*

The people most at risk of displacement in Bushwick are elderly, low-income people of color who have lived in the neighborhood for many years.

## Elderly, Long-Term Renters

**ANTONIO:** *The people that are getting harassed are traditionally older, poorer long-term residents. Those people have the lowest rents because they're rent stabilized, the rents can only go up a certain amount every year. So they want to get rid of those first so they can double and triple the rent ... So the targets are older, black and brown people living in these communities.*

What students see:



# What happens to people who are displaced?



*We don't know the answer to that. It's hard to not see a connection between what's happening in the housing market and the fact that we have a record number of people living in the homeless shelters ... Some people end up in homeless shelters but probably many more people are being forced to move [to other housing], but we don't know where they go. That's a really important question.*



12 out of 14 people surveyed in the neighborhood said they knew somebody that had to move because their rent and/or cost of living became too expensive.

# Is there a solution?



## Build More Housing

**JESSICA:** One way to address displacement is to create more housing and more affordable housing and that takes the pressure off and over time would help bring the rents down and so hopefully, eventually there'd be less displacement.



## Raise Wages

**JESSICA:** It's not just about housing. It's about both having affordable housing and having jobs that pay people wages that allow them to pay rent. And for people who can't work, having government supports to help pay rent.



## Improve and Maintain Public Housing

**MATTHEW:** Right now we're working to fix up those apartments which will make life better for the people that are living in affordable apartments in Bushwick. NYCHA has a lot of land on which more affordable housing or senior housing could be built. So we're gonna push the city to build more affordable housing here in Bushwick.



## Know Your Rights and Enforce the Law:

**JESSICA:** New York City is actually in a better position than a lot of other cities because we have rent stabilization, a million unit are rent stabilized. We have a lot of public housing and a lot of other government subsidized housing and there's rules that regulate all this. Part of the problem is that sometimes those rules get broken, so people need to know ... what the rules are and what your rights are.

**ANTONIO:** [I am proposing] a set of bills called Stand for Tenant Safety [which] make it tougher for landlords who are using construction to harass tenants.

# What can we do now?

## Get Involved

We could protest and call attention to ourselves and get people to back each other so our voices can be heard! **-ISABELLE MARTINEZ,** EBC High School student and Bushwick resident

**MATTHEW:** The misconception I hear often is that it's too late to keep Bushwick affordable. That gentrification has already changed this neighborhood so much that it's beyond the brink. But that's just not true. The vast majority of Bushwick are working families and working people. You know there's 1500 affordable apartments in Hope Gardens alone and space to build thousands more ... A lot of people are sticking it out and staying in their apartments, and with the right work, this neighborhood could be kept affordable without a doubt.

**CHRISTOPHER:** Create an association of small businesses so that way the neighborhood is community-based and is self-reliant.



## Find Common Ground:

**ANTONIO:** I have a very diverse, gentrifying community. I have to cater to two types of communities. One that's extremely poor and one that's extremely rich that have certain issues where they differ ... I look for the common denominator ... They both want a safe community, they want high quality schools, and they all actually want affordable housing. Even people who are paying a lot would like to pay much less than they're currently paying.

Bring the community together and make a plan that everyone agrees to. **-NAYELLY ROJAS,** EBC High School student and Bushwick resident

We need to build trust in the community. **-DAIMIAN DAVIS,** EBC High School student and Brownsville resident





# Resources

To learn more about the Stand for Tenant Safety bill visit: <http://www.standfortenantsafety.com>

To learn more about East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC) visit: <http://ebc-iaf.org>

To download a copy of the NYU Furman Center's Report, "State of New York City's Housing and Neighborhoods 2016," visit: [http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC\\_2016\\_Full.pdf](http://furmancenter.org/files/sotc/SOC_2016_Full.pdf)

**The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)** is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities.

This project is one of CUP's **Urban Investigations** — project-based afterschool programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and Teaching Artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the fields of arts and social justice. To learn more about CUP, visit [welcometoCUP.org](http://welcometoCUP.org).

## CUP

Teaching Artist, Project Lead: Fielding Hong  
Designer: Kyle Richardson  
Project Support: Jenn Anne Williams

Thanks to our interviewees:  
Vincent Hall, Jr., Matthew Marienthal,  
Antonio Reynoso, Jessica Yager

Special thanks to: Leila Arisa,  
Daniel Girard, Jeneuse Geula  
and Deja Holden

## EBC High School For Public Service

is a small high school in Bushwick, Brooklyn dedicated to educating the whole child. EBC has created a rigorous, inclusive, and warm environment in which all students thrive.

## EBC High School

Principal: Shawn Brown  
Assistant Principal: Marc Engel  
Assistant Principal: Latasha Gray  
Students: Daimian Davis, Rosa Fernandez,  
Christopher Garcia, Isabelle Martinez,  
Jaysalee Robles, Nayelly Rojas



Major support for this program was provided by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council and Council Member Antonio Reynoso.

