

# BRONX *Times*

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## WHEDco, NYU collaborate for Melrose exhibition

By Steven Goodstein

A non-profit development organization recently collaborated with a city university to launch a history exhibit.

Earlier this month, Women's House and Economic Development Corporation partnered with New York University Gallatin School of Individualized Study for the 'Narrating Our Neighborhood: The Melrose Oral History Project' exhibition.

The history exhibit, which took place from Friday, May 5 to Friday, May 12 in the museum space on the first floor of Boricua College, 890 Washington Avenue, featured an oral presentation by 18 NYU students who previously conducted interviews with longtime Melrose and Mott Haven residents.

The longtime residents shared generations of pictures, newspaper articles, stories and other documents from their previous experiences of living in the south Bronx with the students, which were also present at the exhibition.

The exhibition was held to give a voice to the residents through untold stories and unseen images of the neighborhood's history, including culture, development, displacement and revitalization, among other topics, as well as to highlight the neighborhood's activism, pride, diversity, struggle and resiliency.

The students from the school's Urban Democracy Lab worked on the project for the entire spring 2017 semester. About 35 people attended the opening night reception.

"This partnership (between WHEDco and NYU's Gallatin School) helped our students build strong connections with the community - who had a lot of material to share with us," said Dr. Rebecca Amato, associate director of the school's Civic Engagement Initiatives and Urban Democracy Lab. "With this project, the students instantly fell in love with the (Melrose) neighborhood - and the residents who have lived here for decades."

One of the goals that Gallatin School's Urban Democracy Lab, according to Amato, is to continue to improve their archive with accounts and documents from other residents who have lived in neighborhoods which are rich in history.

"You could feel and understand the presence of history here - and this was a great opportunity for the students to acknowledge the residents' previously unknown and untold stories," she added. "You can also

feel the residents' commitment to their neighborhood and to each other - they are very proud of where they come from.”

In their 25-year history of shaping, preserving and improving the Melrose neighborhood, WHEDco has completed several developments, including this year's Bronx Commons groundbreaking, Melrose Retail Space Tour, the Bronx Tracks Mural in Railroad Park and Bronx Music at Melrose - an annual summer streets initiative which was part of NYC Department of Transportation's Weekend Walks Program.

They have also started various education programs and created easier access to healthy food and transportation.

WHEDco's most recent project, the Bronx Commons includes 300 affordable housing units and the Bronx Music Hall, a 14,000-square foot, 300-seat music venue to reconnect with and reclaim the pioneering history of Bronx music.

To view the full archives of NYU's Gallatin School's Urban Democracy Lab's oral history project, visit: [displacedhistories.hosting.nyu.edu/spring2017](http://displacedhistories.hosting.nyu.edu/spring2017)

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