



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 31, 2023

MEDIA CONTACT: Isabel Shepard, Isabel.shepard@brooklynbp.nyc.gov, (929) 469 6168

Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso Celebrates Women Storytellers With the Brooklyn Comedy Collective and The Laundromat Project in Honor of Women’s History Month

Comedians Chanel Ali and Sara Hennessey From the Brooklyn Comedy Collective Performed Stand-Up Comedy Sets

Artist Kira Joy Williams From The Laundromat Project Led Brooklynites in a Storytelling Micro-Workshop Honoring the Radical History of Black Women Storytellers and Craft-Workers Who Used Quilting to Preserve Cultural Memory

*****PHOTOS AVAILABLE [HERE](#)*****

BROOKLYN, NY (March 31, 2023) – More than 150 Brooklynites joined Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso last night to celebrate the “Women Who Tell Our Stories” with an evening of comedy and storytelling at Brooklyn Borough Hall. The Women’s History Month celebration – hosted with the support of Brooklyn for All, Inc. and Ponce Bank – featured comedy sets by comedians Chanel Ali and Sara Hennessey from the Brooklyn Comedy Collective, as well as a micro-workshop on storytelling and placemaking led by Brooklyn-based artist Kira Joy Williams of The Laundromat Project, a Black-rooted, POC-centered, community-based arts organization dedicated to the advancement of artists and residents of New York City as change agents within their own communities.

Kira’s workshop honored the radical history of Black women storytellers and craft-workers who used quilting in order to preserve cultural memory and communicate across physical distances and generations. Kira first shared her oral history and visual storytelling project, [Home is in the Stories](#), highlighting stories shared with her by Black women in Brooklyn. Participants then participated in an interactive version of this project, sharing their stories of home and capturing

portraits of one another. At the workshop's close, participants created a collective, photo-based story-quilt. **PHOTO OF LAST NIGHT'S STORY-QUILT AVAILABLE [HERE](#).**

“Storytelling is at the heart of everything that makes us special: the traditions of our ancestors, the compassion of community, and the subversive imagination that spurs local and global change,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso**. “This month, we’re celebrating the women who carry our stories beyond borders and across time – whether through spoken word and oral history, song and music, poetry and prose, and so much more. It’s through their creativity and perseverance that once-whispered stories and people nearly lost to time have secured the place in our cultural memory they deserved from the beginning. I’m so grateful to Ponce Bank for their support in bringing comedians Chanel Ali and Sara Hennessy from the Brooklyn Comedy Collection and artist Kira Joy Williams from The Laundromat Project here to Borough Hall for our Women’s History Month celebration. It was such a treat to enjoy this night of laughter and sharing with Brooklynites from all over this beautiful borough.”

The Borough President awarded Liz Koch and Carolyn Greer, cofounders of the Brooklyn Book Festival, with citations in honor of their decades of contributions to arts and culture in Brooklyn, including their work bringing 40,000 people together annually at the largest free literacy event in New York City. The evening celebration was made possible by the support of Brooklyn for All, Inc. and Ponce Bank, with Brooklyn Brewery and Heights Chateau providing refreshments.

“At Ponce Bank, we have a history of championing women in business, women in the workplace, and women of all ages and backgrounds,” said **Madeline Marquez, Executive Vice President/ Chief External Affairs Officer at Ponce Bank**. “It’s been an important mission of ours, supporting women to reach their goals and to accomplish whatever we set out to achieve. We’re particularly proud that we have women at all levels of our banking organization – women in management, women at the branch level, and women working with business and retail clients in the community. Acknowledging Women’s History Month goes hand in hand with what we do at Ponce Bank. At the same time, we’re proud once again to work with the Brooklyn Borough President in support of women throughout Brooklyn, and beyond. We’re enthusiastic about working with Borough President Antonio Reynoso and we look forward to continuing to work closely with his office to further elevate the role of women – not just in the workplace, but throughout our entire community.”

“Comedy is thankfully shifting focus from a man's perspective about airline food, to include and celebrate a woman's perspective about airline food. And things other than airline food too,” said **Maya Sharma, Programming Director of the Brooklyn Comedy Collective**. “It's a needed change, and my experience at BCC has been crucial for developing my personal voice and giving me the confidence to share it unapologetically through a microphone.”

“Thank you to Brooklyn Borough President Reynoso for inviting The Laundromat Project and our Create Change Artist-in-Residence Kira Joy Williams to participate in this dynamic Women’s History Month program,” said **Ayesha Williams, Executive Director of The Laundromat Project**.

“It is not just a privilege but an honor to uplift and amplify the stories of women. Each story holds power to inspire and transform our communities and the world for the better. This is evident through Kira’s project *Home is in the Stories*, an artistic archive comprising portraits of and oral histories from Black residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn. With Women’s History Month’s focus on Storytelling, Kira’s project reminds us that it is imperative we take control of our own narratives and that our stories are the essential basis for building lasting community power.”

ABOUT THE [BROOKLYN COMEDY COLLECTIVE](#)

The Brooklyn Comedy Collective (BCC) is an alt comedy theater in Brooklyn with a mission to produce irreverent, fearless shows from a wide range of voices, pay its artists, and inspire students to approach performance from a place of joy and fierceness. BCC believes in the power of collective decision making and ensuring a diversity of voices are at the table. From year-round comedy classes to workshops for businesses large and small to improv festivals and live comedy produced Tuesdays-Sundays nights in East Williamsburg, BCC celebrates anyone who wants to let their freak flag fly.

ABOUT CHANEL ALI

Chanel Ali is a standup comic who blossomed on the Philadelphia circuit before taking her commanding stage presence and storyteller style to NYC. She's been featured on MTV's Girl Code, Comedy Central, Tru TV, and Starz.

ABOUT SARA HENNESSEY

Sara Hennessey is an acclaimed Toronto comedian who now lives in Brooklyn, New York. Her big credit is Just For Laughs Montreal, which she has performed at numerous times. Sara is the co-star, co-creator, and co-writer of the CBC Comedy series Terrific Women. She has 3 comedy albums available: Huge Bitch, They Know Too Much, and Trouble in Saradise.

ABOUT [THE LAUNDROMAT PROJECT](#)

The Laundromat Project (The LP) is a Black-rooted, POC-centered, community-based arts organization dedicated to the advancement of artists and residents of New York City as change agents within their own communities. The LP envisions a world in which artists and neighbors in communities of color work together to harness the power of creativity that has the ability to inspire and initiate meaningful change and that generates long-lasting impact. The LP makes sustained investments in growing a community of multiracial, multigenerational, and multidisciplinary artists and neighbors committed to societal change by supporting their artmaking, community building, and leadership development.

Since 2005, The Laundromat Project has directly invested over \$1M in over 200 multiracial, multigenerational, and multidisciplinary artists; nearly 90 innovative public art projects; and a creative community hub in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn, while engaging close to 50,000 New Yorkers across the city and beyond. The idea of a laundromat as a primary place for engagement has expanded over time. It now serves as a metaphor for a variety of community settings in which

artists and neighbors transform their lives and surroundings. The LP's programming has evolved to take place in community gardens, public plazas, libraries, sidewalks, local cultural organizations, and other places where people gather.

In 2020 at the top of the pandemic, the LP signed a 10-year lease on their new home on Fulton Street in the heart of Bed-Stuy, bringing them back to where they were founded. In their new home, the LP seeds creative ideas & civic actions throughout Central Brooklyn, supporting creative initiatives rooted in community, that foster connections, and ignite conversations and collaborations. Sign up for The LP newsletter: <http://eepurl.com/halRJv>

ABOUT [KIRA JOY WILLIAMS](#)

Kira Joy Williams (she/they) is an artist and community builder based in Brooklyn, NY on occupied Lenape land. Kira strives to contribute positively and generatively to existing visual representation of Black people in the U.S. by creating archival materials in collaboration with the very people being represented. Through photographs and oral history, Kira's art explores notions of diaspora, home, care, and community. Her photographs and recorded histories exist in the wake of longstanding memory-work traditions that use the past to make sense of the present and construct a new future—one in which we all belong. Kira received a BA from the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University in 2015 and is currently a master's student at Gallatin. Kira believes wholeheartedly in the power of art, abundance, and mutual aid, and in her plant babies.

###