

Courier Life

P U B L I C A T I O N S

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Brooklyn beat

June 5 drum call to explore the various types of African drumming in the borough

On June 5, hundreds of drummers are expected to gather on the steps of the Brooklyn Public Library's main branch in Park Slope for a celebration of the different African drumming styles practiced in Brooklyn in a nod to the borough's long history with the practice.

Even before there was Drummers' Grove in Prospect Park, drummers would congregate at spaces such as Brower Park in Crown Heights to jam on their congas.

That's where Neil Clarke got his start as a teen during the 1960s.

"I used to walk by there and I was fascinated," said Clarke, a Bedford-Stuyvesant native who went on to travel the world with artists such as Harry Belafonte and is co-curating the event.

During the drum call, nearly a dozen different styles of drumming — as practiced in African, Afro-Caribbean, African American and Hispanic diasporic communities including Ghana, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic — will be performed.

The gathering serves as both an entertaining jam, as well as a chance to introduce people who may be familiar with only one type of drumming style — such as the popular Djembe form, a fast drumming style from Senegal — to the variety that exists.

"A really important part of the day is teaching people the many different styles of African drumming being practiced in Brooklyn other than the Djembe," said co-curator Dr. Kay Turner, a folklorist the Brooklyn Arts Council, which is organizing the event as part of its year-long Black Brooklyn Renaissance festival.

The event will also include drum-making workshops and drumming demos. So bring your own drum and get in line.

Black Brooklyn Drum Call at Brooklyn Public Library's Central Branch plaza [Grand Army Plaza at Flatbush and Eastern Parkway in Park Slope, (718) 230-2100], June 5 from 2-5:30 pm. For info, visit www.brooklynartscouncil.org.