

Memories of Migration

Event Report

Partner: Queens Library: Queens Memory, Fresh Meadows Community Library, Children's Learning and Discovery Center, and the Older Adults Program
Staff Name: Lori Wallach, Natalie Milbrodt, Richard Lee, Lynn Cole, Kevon Ajodhia
Event Name: Memories of Migration: Making a Talking Family Story Quilt: Workshop #2
Event Date: September 23, 2017
Event Description: This second session of our workshop series was dedicated almost entirely to recording participants' interviews. To make sure we had plenty of time for recording everyone, Natalie, Lori and Richard set up an "interview set" in advance, with two chairs facing each other and a digital recorder positioned between them. Additional chairs were arranged in a U-shape to allow all attendees to hear each other's stories. Once several attendees arrived, we began recording. Using the questions they had selected the previous week, participants recorded 15- to 20-minute interviews about their family migration experiences. Four out of five interviewees spoke of their own immigration to the U.S., while the fifth discussed her father's experience. We took a short break in the middle of the session to have Lynn and Kevon demonstrate how the LilyPad and its components will attach to the quilts, using the sample square from the previous week. We then continued the interviews until all were recorded. The session ran two and a half hours, from 2:30 to 5:00 pm, the library's closing time.
Memories of Migration Activities: Five participants recorded interviews centered around their family migration stories. The recordings were taken back to Queens Central Library for preservation, and our staff will edit them into short clips to be embedded in the quilts. Participants will also receive copies of their full interviews on flash drives. It took Lori approximately 2 hours per interview to edit the clips, save them to the mini SD cards used by the LilyPads, and copy all the audio to individual flash drives.
Number of Participants: 5 registered attendees, all adults
Comments and/or Concerns: Our two older participants from the first session both dropped out of the series, but one new attendee (a previous Queens Memory volunteer) joined the program. Since several attendees were late in arriving due to public transportation problems, we had to rearrange some of the interview pairs, with Natalie interviewing one participant herself. Although we had the room locked during the recording period to prevent interruptions, a library staff person did walk in on one interview, but the disruption was minimal.
Analysis of Event: The interviewing process went very well. The four participants who had attended the first week were well-prepared to tell their stories, and we allowed the "audience" to offer additional questions that elicited even more details. The new participant was interviewed last, after listening to the others' stories, and did a good job of telling his story on the spot. In future iterations of this workshop, we would value everyone hearing each other's interviews as it worked out to do with this group. It grounded the work we were doing in the real purpose of programs like these - creating opportunities for community connection and creative self-expression. In a larger group, this interview day would need to be a longer session, or broken into two sessions, but it would be worth it.





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