



I ENY

a storybook record!

WHAT'S THIS?

In the southeastern part of East New York, Brooklyn, there is a huge development going up: the Nehemiah Spring Creek Houses.

In the midst of the 2009 housing crisis, it presents a very different model for housing development. Students from Brooklyn College Community Partnership (BCCP) at Wingate campus collaborated with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) to do a semester-long investigation of the area. This book and soundtrack use documentary and fiction to show our journey into this uncharted land.

"We did a lot of research on the history of the land. We interviewed and photographed many people and things. It was cool because I knew a lot about East New York. I used to live there."

Nayelly Escobar

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PROJECT TEAM:

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)

Teaching Artist and Project Director: Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Project Director: Valeria Mogilevich

Education Intern: Prudence Katze

Researchers: Mariana Mogilevich, John Mangin

Design Assistance: Rosten Woo

Transcribers: Moises Berrun, Carrie Fox, Elizabeth Hopkins, Luther B. Young III

for more on CUP, visit www.anothercupdevelopment.org

Brooklyn College Community Partnership (BCCP)

Students: Ian Boyd, Thaddeus Cooke, Nayelly Escobar, Dionne Matthias, William Metellus, Gavin Noble, Isaiah Peeples, Kendra Tull

Site Director Wingate Campus: Jessica Weis

Program Coordinator: Jason Babb

Youth Worker: Umair Ilyas

BCCP Program Director: Steve Ausbury

Special thanks:

A: Walter Campbell, Brooklyn Community Board 5

B: Ronald Waters, Nehemiah Housing Development Fund Corporation

C: Reverend David Keith Brawley, St. Paul Community Baptist Church

D: Jean-Paul Ho, Hayden Stephen, Dorothy Leggett, Fillmore Real Estate

E: Nehemiah Spring Creek Houses!

Ronald Dillon, Concerned Homeowners Association

Robert Hasselbrook and Bill McShane, Capsys Corp.

ENY



BROOKLYN!
NEW YORK CITY



OUR CAST



Reverend David Keith Brawley is the Pastor at St. Paul Community Baptist Church. They are part of a larger organization called East Brooklyn Congregations (EBC). EBC came up with the idea for the Nehemiah houses. They loan the project money to make sure the homes get built.



Ron Waters is the General Manager and the Director of the Nehemiah Housing Development Fund Corporation. The company acquires property, builds the units, markets them, sells them, and makes sure people move in.



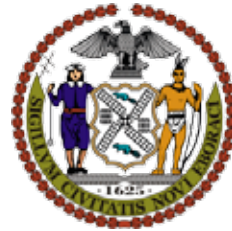
Jean Paul Ho, Hayden Stephen, and Dorothy Leggett all work for Fillmore Real Estate at MeadowWood Estates, a group of condominiums right next to the Nehemiah Spring Creek Houses.



Walter Campbell is the District Manager for Brooklyn's Community Board 5. CB5 is a city agency that monitors city services for the East New York Community.



Ronald Dillon is President of the Concerned Homeowners Association. They are a group of homeowners who get together to have their concerns addressed.



Related Companies bought the land for the Gateway Mall from New York City. The City used that money for infrastructure for the area.

The City of New York is providing direct housing subsidies to residents and already put in the infrastructure in the area (like sewers and streets).

The Community Preservation Corporation gave the project a loan.



Robert Hasselbrook and **Bill McShane** work at Capsys Corp. Capsys builds the Nehemiah Spring Creek Houses.

EAST NEW YORK

BY IAN BOYD

It really sucks badly
I can't live comfortably
No comment on drugs

People are so crazy
I can't take the madness No!
It sucks in Brooklyn

No more peace silence
I'm stuck in this my own Hell
I wish it better

Brooklyn will have peace
Sooner or later in time
All is well again

Brooklyn, Queens, New York
Is a big part of my life
A very sad part

So many bad things
It doesn't really bother
It is just so wrong

As a Guitarist
It is hard cause I'm short
People mess around

It's good in one way
Some people are generous
They help each other live

This is my only chance
To show my true colors Ok
I'm ready to move on



It was funny to see a bicycle just tossed on the side of the road. It has a funny side and a sad side as well.

Gavin Noble

Welcome to the

MURDER CAPITAL

"East New York had a dual personality. First, it was the worst place in Brooklyn that you could live. Second of all, if you lived in that section and survived, you had it made because you lived in the worst place in the world."

Ronald Dillon

"I remember ten or twenty years ago, people would tell me 'do not go to that neighborhood at night, do not go when it gets dark.' I remember one time I was stopped at a red light, and a group of people tried to get into my car. And that's how bad it was, you had drug dealers, you had all kinds of problems."

Jean-Paul Ho

"The 75th precinct, I can recall, used to walk around with T-shirts saying 'the killing fields.' This was the murder capital of New York."

Reverend Brawley

*To learn more about the killing fields, listen to track 2



Two ways the neighborhood
could go in the future.
William Metellus

Things we learned from

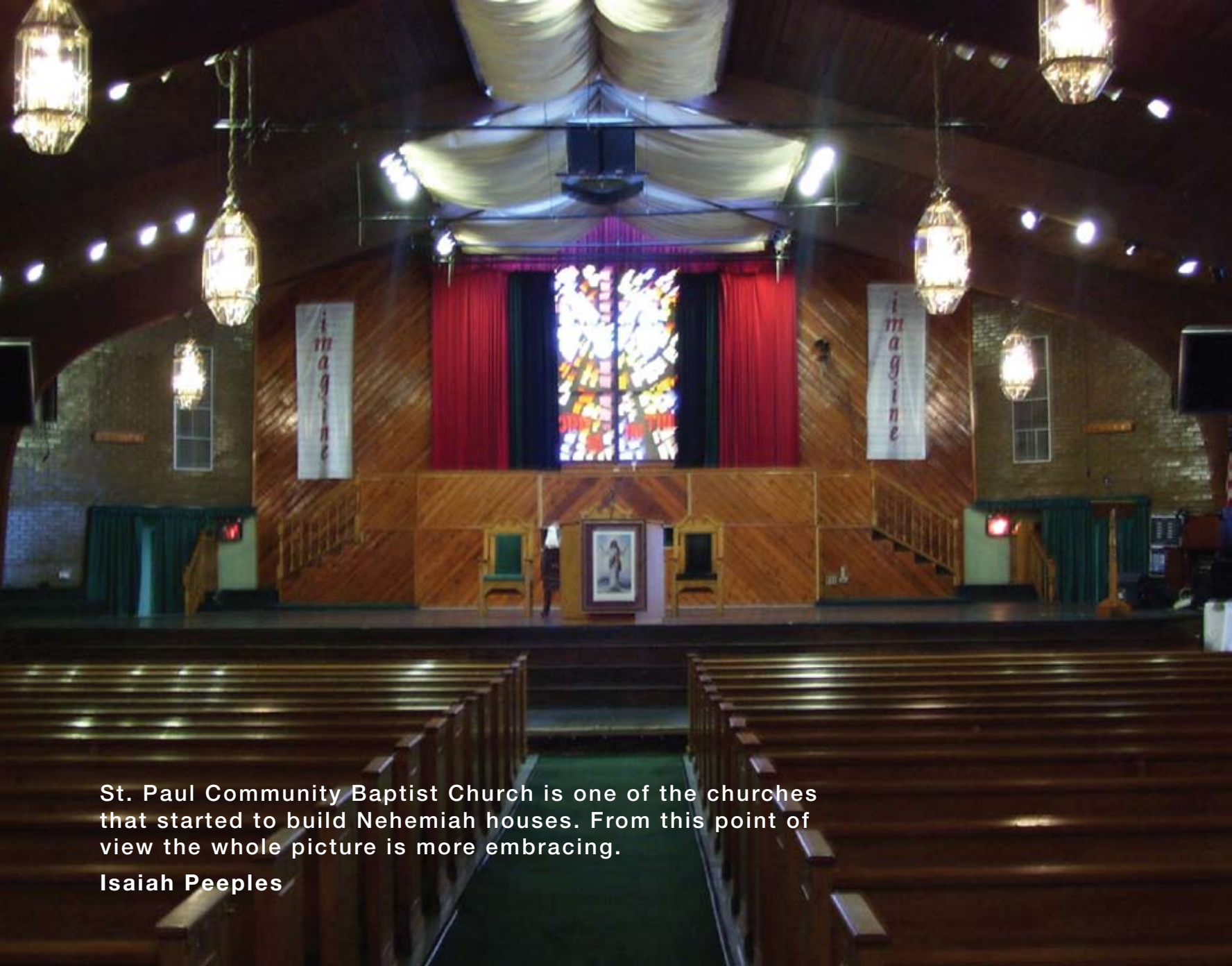
REVEREND BRAWLEY

"First, we joined East Brooklyn Congregations, and one of the things they do in that culture, and in our culture, is what they call house meetings where people from the community just come together and talk about what their needs are. It's kind of a needs assessment. What would you like to do? What would you like to change? And oftentimes it begins, believe it or not, with your anger. I know that sounds like a strange place to start, but wherever somebody's anger is, that's usually where their passion is. So you know when people say, 'Look, our community is devalued, we're disenfranchised and have no services.' So that's kinda how we got into it."

Reverend Brawley

*For more, go to track 3





St. Paul Community Baptist Church is one of the churches that started to build Nehemiah houses. From this point of view the whole picture is more embracing.

Isaiah Peeples



WHAT IS Nehemiah ?

What is it? Who is it? Where did it come from?

NEHEMIAH!

"The Book of Nehemiah speaks about the people of God coming back to their homeland only to find it in ruins. They would have a sword in one hand and trowel in the other in order to build bricks and mortar but also to defend their community. And it was that image that I think gave birth to the idea of rebuilding East Brooklyn."

Reverend Brawley

*Curious about Nehemiah? Go to track 5



This represents the church and you see that you have different people. You can see the different churches coming together here.

Isaiah Peoples


This place is really

MYSTERIOUS

I am used to riding my bike. Mostly I go from my hometown in Canarsie to sometimes Starrett City, Gateway Mall, and even further down. I was riding around there one day and I saw these houses, and I said, "Ah, they are making new houses." I said, "Let me check this up, I got to see what is happening..."

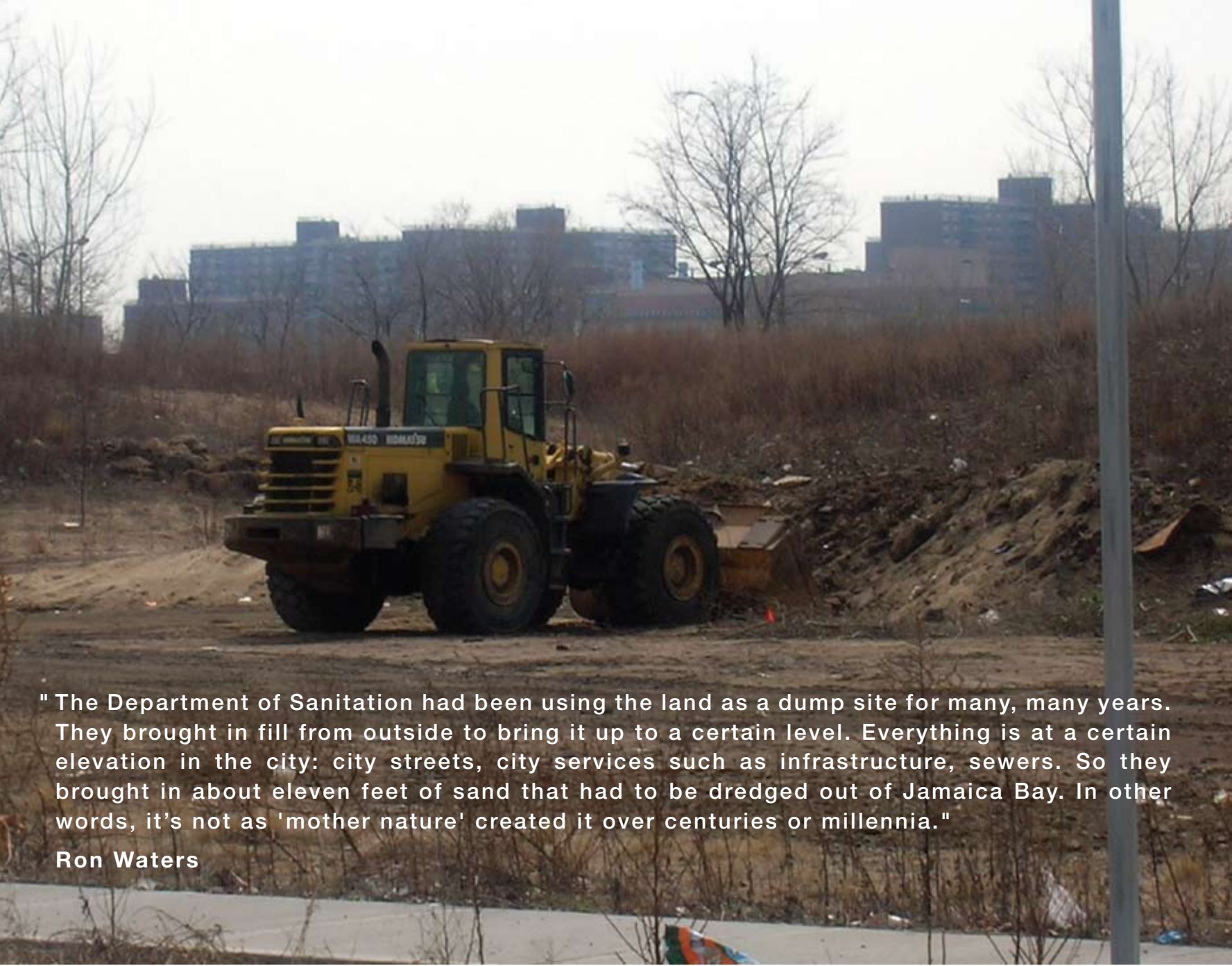
... So I ride my bike, and then there is this big construction dude chasing after me. I heard him say "get out" and "beat it!" I don't know what the hell is going on and I'm just curious. And by doing this project here, it helped me learn a lot more than I used to know about the mysterious buildings that I saw. Now they're not mysterious anymore, I know who and what is behind it.

Isaiah Peoples



What was there before?

***For more of before go to track 6**

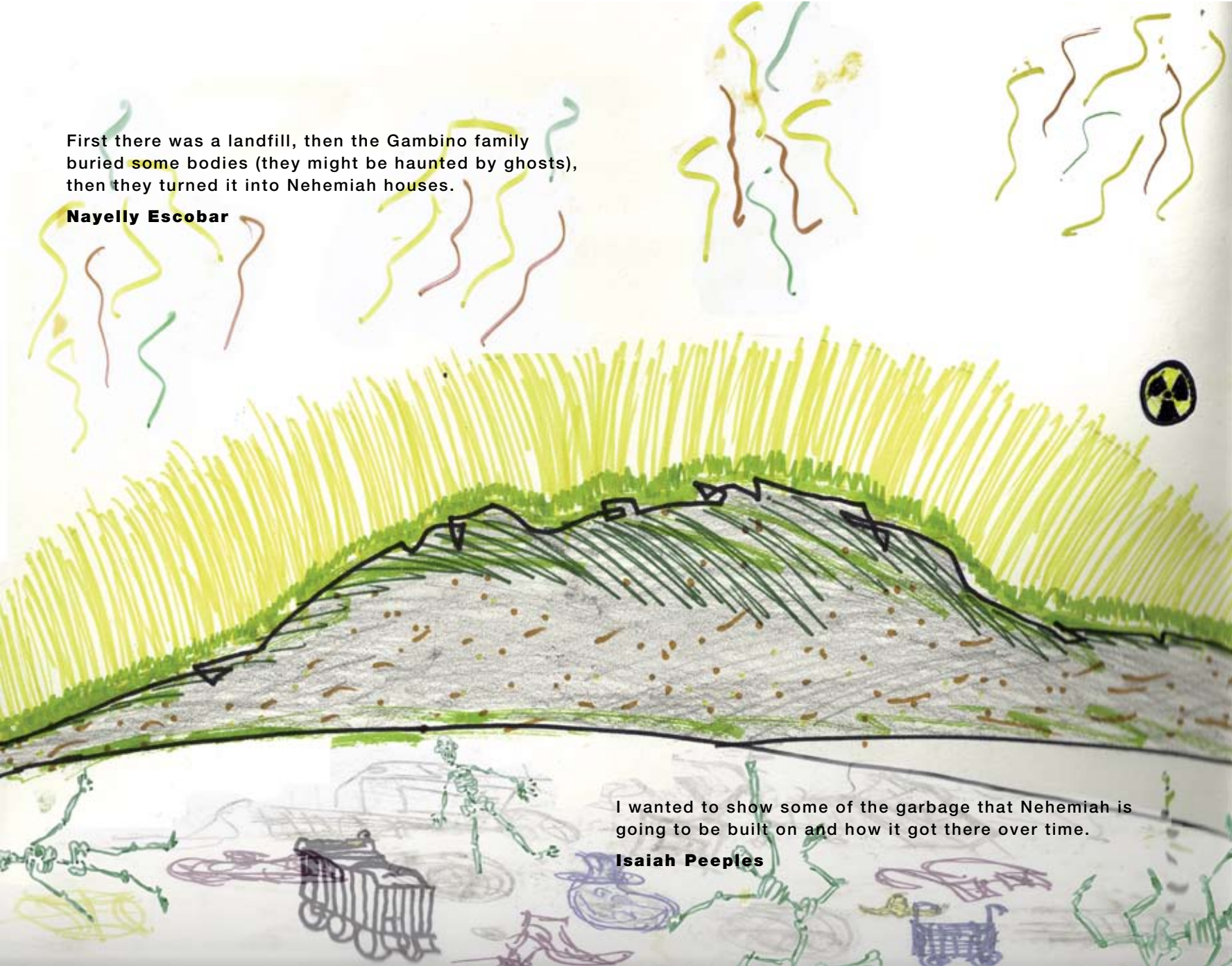


" The Department of Sanitation had been using the land as a dump site for many, many years. They brought in fill from outside to bring it up to a certain level. Everything is at a certain elevation in the city: city streets, city services such as infrastructure, sewers. So they brought in about eleven feet of sand that had to be dredged out of Jamaica Bay. In other words, it's not as 'mother nature' created it over centuries or millennia."

Ron Waters

First there was a landfill, then the Gambino family buried **some** bodies (they might be haunted by ghosts), then they turned it into Nehemiah houses.

Nayelly Escobar



I wanted to show some of the garbage that Nehemiah is going to be built on and how it got there over time.

Isaiah Peeples

The battle of

MOUSE VS. HOUSE

"At one point, if I remember correctly, there was a conservation issue. There was a particular kind of mouse – don't quote me on the exact type of mouse – it was a mouse with a fuzzy tail or something. If you build you may obliterate this mouse. But residents of East New York could care less about a mouse. We wanted to see a house, not a mouse."

Reverend Brawley

*Follow the mouse with track 7




The colors were just pretty much every color. Garbage is like every color and nasty and doodish and when it's mixed together it looks nasty.

Nayelly Escobar







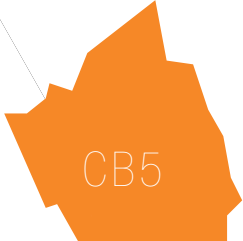
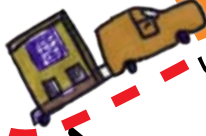
"What makes it real special is that it is one of the largest lots of land left in the city. Basically what we're talking about is the construction of an entire section of the city; a brand new section of the city. I don't know if it's ever been done this large before, so it's unique."

Reverend Brawley

*Listen to track 10 for more

**WHERE
ARE THE
HOUSES
COMING
FROM?**

The houses are pre-fabricated
by Capsys at the Brooklyn
Navy Yard



They're delivered by
truck on local streets

5%



WHERE ARE
THE PEOPLE
COMING FROM?

? 45%



50%

**FOR PHASE I OF THE NEHEMIAH SPRING
CREEK HOUSES:**

50% of the units are reserved for people from Brooklyn Community Board 5 (CB5)

45% are for any New Yorker who wins the housing lottery, is a first-time homebuyer, and has the credit and income to qualify

5% are reserved for uniformed NYPD

After Phase I,

the units will be open to any qualifying first-time homebuyers from all over the City

There will be **five** phases for Nehemiah Spring Creek, 115 - 130 houses will be built in each phase

Living in a

PREFAB PARADISE

"The biggest selling point to modular would be the speed and the quality. One building can come out of the factory in 12 days. The fact that you are saving time completing the projects means that you're saving money, because you are paying less interest on the construction loans."

Robert Hasselbrook



The houses are constructed inside the Navy Yard factory where they are designed to be stacked on top of each other.





They are now placed on trucks ready to be shipped.

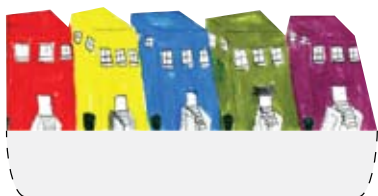
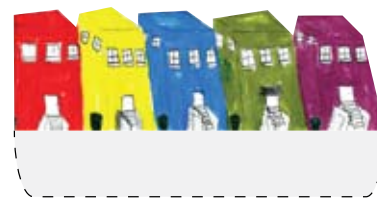
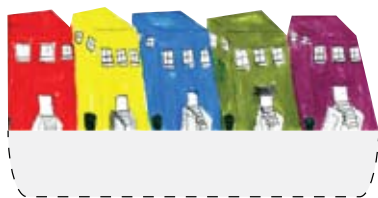
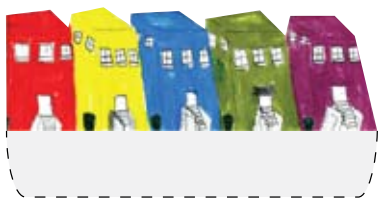


Then they are shipped
overnight to the site.



" It has taken us three years to build 117 houses in Phase I. I expect to do Phase II in two years, because we're all on a roll."

Ron Waters



Make Your Own Spring Creek Development

1. Cut out the houses
2. Fold the tabs down so you have a solid foundation
3. Now you can put your Nehemiah houses anywhere!

Don't go down to the

BASEMENTS

'cause there aren't any

"For this round of houses, Spring Creek, we're not building basements to ensure that everything is environmentally safe for the residents that live there, but the remediation was a phenomenal process."

Reverend Brawley

"The practical impact of building on top of a landfill is that they can't have basements. If you have a basement, methane gas from the landfill will collect in it. The fact is they never remediated any of this stuff. The remediation was 'We're going to pave everything over with black top.' Instead of doing the remediation, the community got no basements."

Ronald Dillon

*Get the down-low on basements on track 7



a couple of minutes with

RON WATERS

Gavin Noble (ENY investigation team): Can you tell us about the process of applying for home ownership?

Ron Waters: Ok. We have an open lottery system for New York City residents.

GN: From all over the City?

RW: Any place in the City. It's advertised in the media. We use the Daily News, we use... what is the civil service paper? El Diario and The Chief. We post it and we give to them an idea of the cost, the low and the high income limits that are a part of the program. Back in 1995 or 1996, we put the ad in the papers, and we received approximately 12,000 requests for an application.

GN: How many houses were there for that phase?

RW: This was for a projected 500 or so odd houses. That shows you what the demand is. A tremendous need. And what we do is then the City comes in and supervises the opening of the mail bags, we pull these letters out of the mail bag at random. And it is opened in the presence of a group of people, including some priests, some reverends, some pastors. The applications are opened very carefully in a supervised manner,

and they are given what is called a "waitlist number." And then we start screening the applications in that sequence, from 1 on. So, it is absolutely over and above what is honest.

GN: You screen the applications, then you pick them at random?

RW: Our first group that we logged was about 3,200 people. And we are slowly going through that. And, by the way, a lot of people don't qualify. Even when you put the income limits in the ad, a lot of people do not qualify.

GN: Can we ask what the limits are?

RW: We have been able to sell houses to people who were \$36,000 a year – that's a household income. In order to get the best financing we use the State of New York Mortgage Association and they dictate the maximum income in order for this to be classified as affordable housing. So, people could earn just a bit over \$100,000 a year, they could still qualify. But, of course in the end, credit history has to be perfect. A-ok, good rating – no judgement against anybody.



"I picked an architect, Alexander Gorlin, who I think it is very capable and competent. But everybody in the world is an architectural critic and some people like it, some people hate it, some people don't care one way or the other. But that is what makes up an interesting world that we are living in."

Ron Waters

***For more from Ron, listen to track 14**

Maybe you should just

FORGET IT

"Oh forget it, the lottery is scam. The lottery is within Nehemiah. So if there are 100 houses being built, and there are 1,000 people going to Nehemiah meetings, there is a lottery for those 1,000 people. If you, not having gone to the meetings, want to apply in the middle of the process, they say the application process is closed."

Ronald Dillon

"We wanted the folks that live here in East New York to get their fair share of the homes. The 50% they reserved in Phase I was satisfying, but it is still not enough."

Walter Campbell



No shirt, no shoes,

NO CARPET

"We like to participate in the city's homeownership program. Which means buying a house, owning property. We don't believe that much in rental. The majority of homebuyers are women, single and sometimes with children. I don't know why, don't ask me."

Ron Waters

"Nehemiah helped a lot of people. The same property they buy for \$40,000 they are selling for about \$300,000. A lot of people have done very well with it. So it does increase the value of the community. We have a census that shows basically when there is more homeownership, and there is pride of homeownership, it does increase the revenue in the community and does change the community itself. And as a real estate person, I can tell you this: it doesn't matter what type of home it is, it's the people, it's the community."

Jean-Paul Ho

"Everybody wants to own a home. Owning a home is the American Dream, ok? You know, it's a tax write-off. One other thing, if you're going to buy a house, I don't care how beautiful the carpet is... pick up your carpet and take it with you. Hardwood floors will take you a long way."

Walter Campbell



Ron Waters in front of polaroids of first-time homebuyers.

Foreclosures are

ESSENTIALLY ZERO

"To date the Nehemiah people have built about 3,000 homes here in East New York and Brownsville, and less than one-half of 1% have any delinquencies. In the world that we live in today, we are an anomaly. I'm not boasting, but I'm proud of this situation. Less than one-half of of 1% is essentially zero. And I credit that to our screening process and the State of New York Mortgage Association who are the underwriters of most of the loans."

Ron Waters



MO' CREDIT

Mo' problems?

"No one should be saying who should live in a neighborhood. We don't live in those dark ages anymore. We live in a world where everyone has an opportunity, and no one should tell you where you should live. It doesn't matter what color you are: green, purple, orange... what matters is your credit."

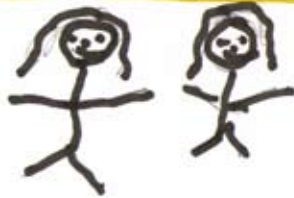
Jean-Paul Ho

"Believe me, you screw up, your score tells them whether you can get a mortgage or you can't. So, if buying a home is an essential thing in your lifetime, then be careful to keep your credit score very high. Best thing you can do. And if you get married make sure you marry a girl who doesn't have a bad credit score, because they add them both together. You may have a good one and she may have a bad one, then you're in trouble. So always marry a rich girl."

Ron Waters

"I have a projection for 2030. When you're dating, the person is going to want your blood type and your credit history."

Hayden Stephen



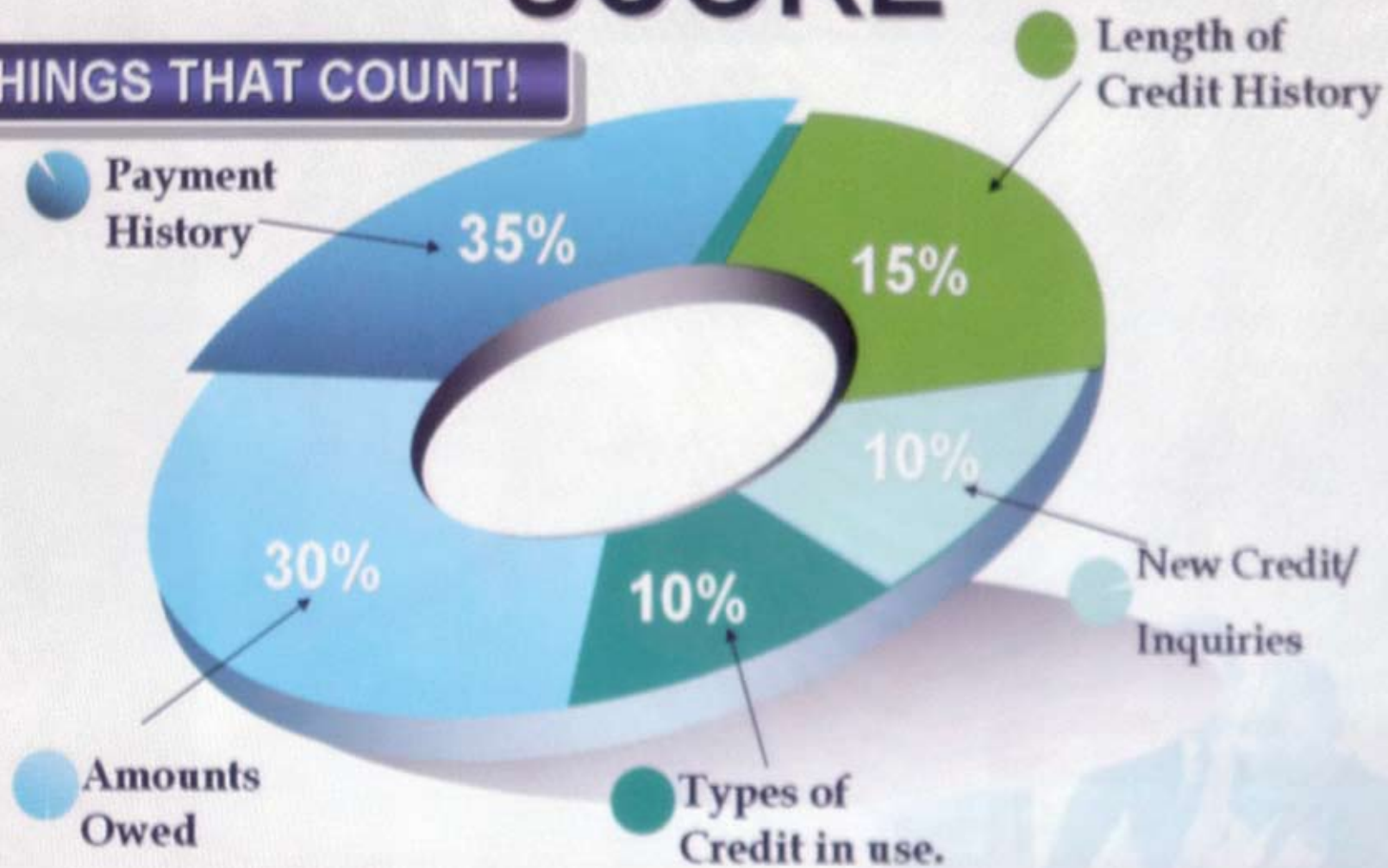
please for money
I don't have
any more!





YOUR CREDIT SCORE

5 THINGS THAT COUNT!





The apartments look fantastic. I would live there. I would own it. I would just come in there and just live there.

Gavin Noble

**FROM THE NEW LOTS
AVENUE SUBWAY,**



THROUGH CLEVELAND STREET,



TO COZINE AVENUE,



TO FLATLANDS AVENUE,





PASSING ASHFORD STREET,



TO THE NEHEMIAH SPRING CREEK HOUSES



SHE DIDN'T DIE, OBVIOUSLY

"There are people who applied for the lotteries back in 1983 who died waiting for Spring Creek. It took so long, people died from different things. They never got their wish. That was their ultimate wish, to get a home in Spring Creek. And we are closing tomorrow on a lady who has waited. She didn't die, obviously. She survived, she is just ready to retire. I think she might have had a baby back when she applied in the 80's. And this baby is now a veteran of the Iraq war, he just came back, he's married and has a child. They're gonna live in the house with her. I mean, it's a real human interest story, fantastic."

Ron Waters

**In the future, I would love to see
these houses filling every part of
Brooklyn.**

Nayelly Escobar



What will life be like in

IN THE FUTURE...

"I think by 2030, at least the trees we've planted will be fully grown. I think by then you will definitely see the supermarket. I think you'll see a good start for transportation. Some would even call it a city within a city by 2030."

Reverend Brawley

"I live in a townhome development in New Jersey. These homes are 25 years old now and there are a thousand of these homes, and the place looks as good, if not better, than when it was built. The landscaping work has now grown, trees have grown, shrubs have grown, all the green stuff is beautiful."

Ron Waters

"If it keeps going the way it is going, in twenty years, there won't be any land available, it'll be fully developed and at its max."

Hayden Stephen

"2030...Maybe the mortgage would just be getting ready to dwindle down, you know because people will get a 25 to 30 year mortgage for those homes."

Walter Campbell

"This is a low-lying area that used to be marshland. It's a probability thing that a flood at five years will only be a minor one. But every 100 years there might be a major one."

Ronald Dillon

*More talk of the future on track 16



THE CREW



CREDITS

BOOK

Front cover: Thaddeus Cooke

Page 3: Map by Rosten Woo

Page 4: Drawings by Isaiah Peeples and Gavin Noble

Page 6: Photo by Gavin Noble

Page 8: Drawing by William Metellus

Page 11: Photo by Isaiah Peeples

Page 12: Photo by Isaiah Peeples

Page 13: Drawing by Dionne Matthias

Page 14: Photo by Isaiah Peeples

Page 17: Drawing by Isaiah Peeples

Page 18: Photo by Gavin Noble

Page 19: Drawings by Isaiah Peeples and Nayelly Escobar

Page 20: Photo by Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Page 21: Drawing by Nayelly Escobar

Page 22 - 23: Photo by Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Page 24 - 25: Drawing by Gavin Noble, map designed by Valeria Mogilevich and Rosten Woo

Page 26 - 28: Photos by Mariana Mogilevich

Page 29: Photo courtesy of Capsys Corp.

Page 30: Photo by Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Page 31: Drawings by Gavin Noble, design by Marlisa Wise

Page 33: Photo by Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Page 34: Photo by Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Page 37: Drawing by Thaddeus Cooke

Page 38: Photo by Isaiah Peeples

Page 41: Photo by Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Page 42 - 43: Drawings by Isaiah Peeples and Dionne Matthias

Page 44: Photo by Prudence Katze

Page 45: Drawing by Gavin Noble

Page 46 - 47: Photos by Gavin Noble, Dionne Matthias, Thaddeus Cooke, Prudence Katze, and Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Page 48: Drawing by Nayelly Escobar

Page 51: Photos by Isaiah Peeples, Thaddeus Cooke, Gavin Noble, William Mettelus, and Prudence Katze

Back Cover: Hatuey Ramos-Fermin

Graphic Design: Rosten Woo

SOUNDS

Track 1: Featuring Dionne Matthias, Gavin Noble, Nayelly Escobar, and Thaddeus Cooke. Music by Ian Boyd

Track 2: Music by Thaddeus Cooke

Track 3: Featuring Gavin Noble. Mixed by Thaddeus Cooke

Track 4: Featuring Nayelly Escobar

Track 5: Featuring Dionne Matthias. Music by Thaddeus Cooke

Track 6: Featuring Gavin Noble and Nayelly Escobar

Track 7: Featuring Thaddeus Cooke

Track 9: Featuring Nayelly Escobar

Track 10: Featuring Gavin Noble. Music by Thaddeus Cooke

Track 11: Featuring Nayelly Escobar. Music by Thaddeus Cooke

Track 12: Featuring Gavin Noble, Nayelly Escobar, and Thaddeus Cooke. Music by Thaddeus Cooke

Track 13: Featuring Gavin Noble. Music by Thaddeus Cooke

Track 14: Music by Thaddeus Cooke and Isaiah Peeples

Track 15: Featuring Gavin Noble

Track 16: Music by Thaddeus Cooke

Additional sound mix: by Rosten Woo

To hear the audio tracks, please visit
www.anothercupdevelopment.org/ENY



