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THE NYC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMMISSION, DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS, AND PUBLIC ARTIST IN RESIDENCE YAZMANY ARBOLEDA ROLL OUT "THE PEOPLE'S BUS"

NYC's Civic Engagement Commission - with its first [Public Artist in Residence](#) Yazmany Arboleda - is taking democracy to the streets by transforming a retired City bus into a community center on wheels to engage people in NYC's civic life through beauty and joy.

This summer, The People's Bus will bring education, arts, and participatory activities into NYC neighborhoods across the five boroughs, beginning with a voter education campaign this weekend.

[A new PSA released today](#) explains how The People's Bus supports the Civic Engagement Commission's mission. (The PSA, photographs, and other creative assets can [be found here](#)). All New Yorkers are invited to get involved at: www.participate.nyc.gov.

NEW YORK - Today, the NYC Civic Engagement Commission (CEC), Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), and Public Artist in Residence (PAIR) Yazmany Arboleda officially unveil "The People's Bus," a mobile unit designed to engage residents in a direct, artistic, and sensory celebration of democracy. Over the past year, the CEC has worked with Arboleda [as part of DCLA's PAIR program](#) to develop The People's Bus, an ongoing, transformative process to reimagine public space in partnership with New Yorkers. The process will galvanize greater civic participation through the physical transformation of the look, use, and feel of a retired bus from the New York City Department of Correction into a community center on wheels geared toward engaging people in NYC's civic life through beauty and joy. The transformation will continue through various participatory events and projects throughout the summer, culminating in The People's Festival in August.

"Civic engagement doesn't have to be inaccessible or uninspiring. The People's Bus will tap into the transformative power of art to excite and engage New Yorkers, particularly those who have historically been underserved and overlooked. The reimagining of The Peoples Bus in all its phases will allow the public to participate in moving beyond simply restoring broken spaces to completely transforming the space for a new purpose and life. The origin of the bus as a former corrections vehicle is an undeniable aspect of its story. The participatory process to transform the bus into a space of connection, resilience, and joy, now will become part of its new legacy." - Dr. Sarah Sayeed, Chair & Executive Director of the New York City Civic Engagement Commission.

"For Democracy to be sustainable it must prioritize the role that beauty and joy play in all parts of city governance. The People's Bus is a gymnasium for the human imagination--now more than ever, we must create spaces where our communities can practice imagining our collective future--a future that takes care of all living creatures." - **Yazmany Arboleda, Public Artist in Residence with the NYC Civic Engagement Commission.**

*"The People's Bus is an exciting, inspiring expression of the power of art to reframe, reimagine, and reengage us with the world around us," said **Cultural Affairs Commissioner Gonzalo Casals.** "With this amazing platform, Yazmany Arboleda and the Civic Engagement Commission are inviting New Yorkers to think of our democracy as something that unites us extends far beyond the polling site on election day. Our Public Artists in Residence program seeks to foster just this kind of dynamic exchange and engagement, and we encourage all New Yorkers to visit a stop of The People's Bus this summer."*

The People's Bus makes its debut this weekend with a city-wide tour promoting voter education, from Saturday, June 12 through Wednesday, June 16, the first 5 days of early voting in the upcoming primary election. This tour will stop at one site in each of the five boroughs and bring information about the upcoming election, ranked choice voting (RCV), and the Civic Engagement Commission's poll site language assistance program. Tour stops, dates, and times are listed below. At each stop, New Yorkers will be invited to practice ranked choice voting, by using a mock ballot to vote on what the bus should look like and what it should bring into communities during The People's Festival in August. The People's Festival will bring civic education and the arts to the five boroughs, focusing in particular on communities that were most impacted by COVID-19, and its programming will be shaped by the months of engagement that kick off this weekend.

The bus, formerly a Department of Correction vehicle, departed Rikers Island earlier this month and will be stationed at the Queens Museum between engagements. Additional events, activations, and partnerships will be announced throughout the summer.

In addition to inviting all New Yorkers to participate in the transformation of the bus, CEC and Arboleda have launched The People's Fellows, a youth-led group that will help direct the bus's transformation and shape its summer programming. The bus will recruit additional members of The People's Fellows on its tour, and NYC youth interested in joining can apply to join at www.participate.nyc.gov.

The Civic Engagement Commission was created in 2018 through a Mayoral Charter Revision Commission and citywide vote. CEC's Mission is to enhance civic participation in order to increase civic trust and strengthen democracy in New York City. The Commission is committed to engaging and listening to communities, while lifting up the voices of all New Yorkers, particularly the underserved and marginalized.

Voter Education Bus Tour (Dates, Times, Locations)

Saturday, June 12th

Brooklyn

[Flatbush Avenue between Empire Boulevard & Lefferts Avenue](#)

12 PM to 3 PM

Sunday, June 13th

Queens

[Diversity Plaza](#)

12 PM to 3 PM

Monday, June 14th

Bronx

[3rd Avenue between East 149th Street & East 148th Street](#)

4 PM to 7 PM

Tuesday, June 15th

Manhattan

[Union Square](#)

4 PM to 7 PM

Wednesday, June 16th

Staten Island

[St. George Ferry Terminal](#)

4 PM to 7 PM

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*"It is crucial that we educate and empower New Yorkers to be active participants in their communities, economies, and elections. The June primary will be one of the most consequential in decades, and we as a City must do all we can to bring voter education and activation directly to the people," said **Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives J. Phillip Thompson**. "The People's Bus taps into the transformative power of art to make Democracy inclusive and accessible and will be an important component in how we make sure to engage, encourage, and listen to all New Yorkers."*

*"We were more than happy to donate one of our former buses for this cause, and it's great to see it embarking on a new life as literally a vehicle for civic engagement. It is an honor to be able to contribute to this initiative and we look forward to seeing the People's Bus out rolling on the streets this summer," said **Department of Correction Commissioner Vincent Schiraldi**.*

*"Art has the power to spark change and that's exactly the premise behind the People's Bus. By reimagining space and creating community centered art, the City will be able to reach New Yorkers in a new, beautiful, and joyful way. With Early Voting for the June Primary starting this weekend, the timing of the launch could not be more opportune. DemocracyNYC is proud to partner with CEC, DCLA, and PAIR to ensure we get out the vote in this final stretch and engage with New Yorkers in all five boroughs in the coming days," said **Laura Wood, Chief Democracy Officer, DemocracyNYC**.*

Civic engagement is key to a robust democracy that works for everyone. The Civic Engagement Commission, through the People's Bus and other powerful initiatives, is ensuring that all New Yorkers have access and knowledge to our democratic processes and are excited to participate in them. - **Jordan Stockdale, Executive Director of the Young Men's Initiative.**

"Our city thrives when all New Yorkers can engage in its public and civic life," said May Malik, Deputy Commissioner, Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. "As the June Primary Election approaches, The People's Bus will serve a critical role in empowering our communities to participate in democracy and have their voices heard. The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs applauds this transformative initiative, and we look forward to continuing our work with City agencies to build power and civic participation throughout our communities." - **May Malik, Deputy Commissioner of The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs**

*"Community engagement to increase civic participation needs to be comprehensive and include ideas that think outside the box," said **Community Affairs Unit Commissioner Roberto Perez.** "I commend Dr. Sarah Sayeed and the Civic Engagement Commission team for the launch of this exciting program. The People's Bus will reimagine how art and education can fuel the empowerment of our communities."*

*"NYC Service is so proud to support the Civic Engagement Commission and The People's Bus. The participatory element of the project will bring local action to life in authentic ways, supporting neighborhood engagement and furthering the already active civic networks we see in NYC communities. By providing information about ranked choice voting to bringing arts and education resources to life, the project reimagines how we can best support residents to advocate for changes they wish to see in their local communities and ensure people power is central to a thriving democracy in NYC." - **Laura Rog, Acting NYC Chief Service Officer, NYC Service***

*"Congratulations to the Civic Engagement Commission and the Department of Cultural Affairs on the launch of the People's Bus," said **Susan Herman, Director of the Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health.** "Thank you for helping communities across the city learn more about how to make their voices heard. Civic engagement and participatory activities foster community and promote our collective mental health as we work towards recovery."*

*"Materials for the Arts is thrilled to be a materials sponsor for Yazmany Arboleda's CEC project, The People's Bus. The mission of The People's Bus aligns with MFTA's mission of promoting creative reuse and providing resources to communities who need them most. From the moment we learned about the project we could not wait to be involved and to see the incredible transformation. " - **Tara Sansone, Deputy Director at Materials for the Arts***

"The power of public spaces during this pandemic has crystalized the importance of our work. The People's Bus and People's Bus Festival will transform public spaces into socially and culturally inclusive environments that nurture healing and joy. Hive Public Space is honored to contribute to a project with the radical vision of transforming a vehicle of oppression into a celebratory gesture of resiliency that is welcoming and accessible to all." - **Alexandra Gonzalez, President, Hive Public Space**

"Participar en este proyecto nos reafirma como personas que pertenecen a un círculo más grande de amor, lucha, progreso, crecimiento y valoración de nuestras capacidades. Mujeres en Movimiento es parte de una gran familia de miembros llegados de todos lados, formamos una red de conocimiento, dedicación y apertura que da forma a esta maravillosa creación. Es pintar nuestros sueños con nuestras manos para mostrarlos al mundo desde nuestra individualidad, que es nuestra comunidad reformada en un ente colectivo digno de ser y pertenecer a este gran país en el que damos lo mejor de nosotros mismos honrando la bendición de crecer y crear día a día un mundo mejor." - **Mujeres en Movimiento**

"We're so excited to be bringing Drag Queen Story Hour to The People's Festival this summer, especially as it will give us a chance to bring our program to some parts of the city that we don't often get to visit. At Drag Queen Story Hour NYC, we use storytelling and creativity to give kids of all ages the confidence to express themselves however they feel comfortable, and one of our core values is to bring this vital programming to kids and families that wouldn't necessarily seek us out. After a year of doing DQSH on Zoom and Instagram Live, we can't wait to get back to doing more in-person events in communities across the city. Also, we recently started doing programming for teens, so we're especially excited about working with the Youth Core to develop our programming." - **Rachel Aimee, Executive Director, Drag Queen Story Hour**

*"The People's Bus is an inspiring community-driven effort in New York City and **Little Sun** is honored to contribute a series of programs at the intersection of art and the environment. To make progress on the climate crisis we must first create opportunities for all people -- but especially young people -- to share their own stories and dreams for the future. The vital act of imagining allows us to visualize the world we want to inhabit, so that we can get to work making it real. In our experience at Little Sun, there is no better way to embark on this process than through art."* - **John Heller, CEO, Little Sun**

"At Museum of Ice Cream, we believe in the power of connection through ice cream. We are excited to be working with The Peoples Bus to bring a traveling version of joy and ice cream to New Yorkers across the boroughs, spreading the important messages of education, rights and creativity to the hardest hit areas of NYC this summer." - **Manish Vora, Co-founder of Museum of Ice Cream**

"As [Segregation is Killing Us](#), our investigation into the disparate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color suggests, urbanism has been leveraged to systematically oppress underprivileged communities for far too long. Territorial Empathy is honored to support a project that challenges this painful history, demonstrating that participatory design can facilitate community healing and joy. It is our hope that all New Yorkers feel seen and

celebrated by an element of the People's Bus and People's Bus Festival design." - **Zarith Pineda, Founder of Territorial Empathy**

"Grounded in respect and consideration for the ongoing traumas caused by the government, The People's Bus is a vehicle for healing. Fueled by the power of solidarity, driven by interdependent community, and guided by radical imagination-- we embody the diversity, grit, and compassion that defines the spirit of New York City." - **Emma Rehac, Youth Executive Director, The People's Bus**

"The people's bus is a vehicle of joy and empowerment for communities that have been attacked by the violence of COVID and law enforcement. It represents taking a tool that has been oppressing communities and transforming it into a mechanism for our own resistance, peace, and healing." - **Isabella Baugher, People's Fellow**

"Agencie is thrilled to participate in the poetic reconstruction of a prison bus into a traveling platform that inspires hope and wonder. This beautiful inversion of a vehicle typically used to lock people up into an instrument that heightens one's awareness and imagination will serve as one wonderful example of how state resources can be better deployed to lay the foundations for a brighter future." - **Andrés Ulises Cortés, Agencie Architecture & Engineering**

"The People's Bus will bring New Yorkers together in new and innovative ways. Both artistic and interactive, it is a tangible demonstration of the power of art to engage, heal and help us move forward with hope. Bridge Philanthropic Consulting is pleased and proud to be selected by the City of New York's Civic Engagement Commission to be part of this groundbreaking project." - **Dwayne Ashley, Bridge Philanthropic Consulting**

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