

Lizania Cruz: Every Immigrant Is a Writer

A culmination of Cruz's five-year project sheds light on the collective experiences of Black immigrants

April 8–August 26, 2022

Opening Reception:
Thursday, April 8,
2022, 6–8pm

Gallery Hours:
By appointment via
info@iscp-nyc.org,
Monday–Friday,
10:30am–5:30pm

Every immigrant is a writer. This friend of mine, Patricia Engel, has a line in a novel of hers about all immigrants being artists, because a great part of the immigrant experience is an act of creation, or a re-creation of self. I think being an immigrant can definitely feed into being a writer. Being a writer is kind of being an immigrant in words.

–Edwidge Danticat, Haitian-American novelist and short story writer



Lizania Cruz, *Happening, We the News*, 2018, public intervention, dimensions variable. Photo by Neha Gautam

Lizania Cruz: Every Immigrant Is a Writer delves into individual and collective experiences of Black immigrants and first-generation Black Americans, culminating the artist's five-year project, *We the News*. It encompasses the many creative and participatory formats that Cruz's iterative project has taken since 2017, ranging from community story circles, a newsstand display of zines available for visitors to activate, to workshops convened for immigrants to trace their routes to get to the United States. Recurrent subjects arise about race versus cultural identity; about the sacrifices that immigrants make when they uproot themselves and their families; and the perils of seeking asylum in a new country. Visitors to the gallery will be able to peruse documentation and archival materials from previous iterations of *We the News* in Pittsburgh, Miami, and numerous communities throughout New York City, and view a short video of a happening of the artist activating the newsstand in Miami in 2018. They will also be invited to participate directly in the exhibition by following guided writing and drawing prompts.

Artists who work in communities are often faced with the question of how to end a project. After the funds are spent and the events have concluded, what remains can defy easy categorization. Photo and video documentation, critical texts, and ephemera from interactions are parts of the lasting presence of a social work of art, but what kind of archive can document the lived experiences of the participants? Can the tender moments, the trust forged and joy celebrated be archived for future generations to access too? As a part of this exhibition, Cruz will invite former collaborators to speak with her in recorded interviews about their story circle experiences, archiving, and the importance of publishing from an immigrant perspective that will be added to the final archive of the *We the News* zines. Conversation partners will include Samah Sisay, lawyer, Bertha Justice Fellow at the Center for Constitutional Rights and participant in the first *We the News* story circle; Yvette Ramírez, archivist and former Program Associate of The Laundromat Project; Emmy Catedral, poet and Pilipinx American Library co-founder; and Adriana Monsalve of Homie House Press.

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Additional events will be announced shortly.

Lizania Cruz (she/her) is a Dominican participatory artist and designer interested in how migration affects ways of being and belonging. Through research, oral history, and audience participation, she creates projects that highlight a pluralistic narrative on migration. Cruz has been an artist-in-

residence and fellow at the Laundromat Project Create Change (2017-2019), Robert Blackburn Workshop Studio Immersion Project (SIP) (2019), Jerome Hill Artist Fellow, Visual Arts (2021-2022), and Planet Texas 2050 Artist Resident – University of Texas (2022), among others. Her work has been exhibited at the Arlington Arts Center, Arlington; BronxArtSpace, New York City; Project for Empty Space, Newark; ArtCenter South Florida, Miami Beach; Jenkins Johnson Project Space, Brooklyn; The August Wilson Center, Pittsburgh; and Sharjah's First Design Biennale, Sharjah, among others. Recently she was part of *ESTAMOS BIEN: LA TRIENAL 20/21* at El Museo del Barrio, the first national survey of Latinx artists by the institution.

Lizania Cruz: Every Immigrant Is a Writer is supported in part by Vision Fund; Hartfield Foundation; Milton and Sally Avery Arts Foundation; New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council; New York City Council District 34; New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature; Toby Devan Lewis; Wilhelm Family Foundation; William Talbott Hillman Foundation; and Woodbury Foundation.

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