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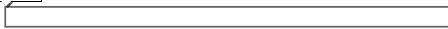


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BY DANIEL
MAURER

B+B NEWSROOM

These North Brooklyn Writers Agree: Stop Talking Shit About Williamsburg

44:22



After splicing with a pair of **downtown memoirists** about changes in the East Village and Lower East Side over the years, we brought together to talk North Brooklyn. Yesterday, before their reading at Pete's Candy

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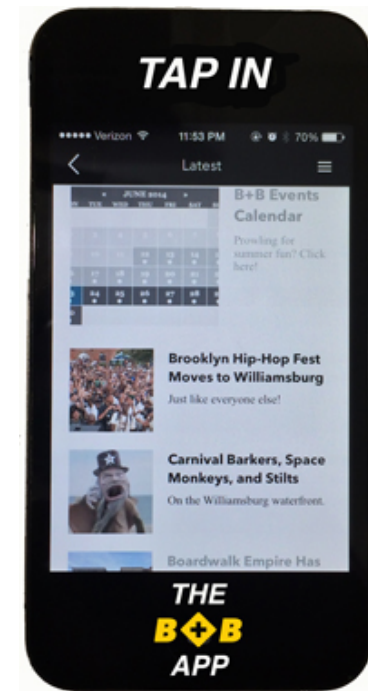
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Store, we spoke to Mike DeCapite and Bradley Spinelli, who both live in Williamsburg, as well as Jacob Tomsky, a Bushwick novelist whose hotel memoir, *Heads in Beds*, hit the *New York Times* bestseller list (again! this time as a paperback) earlier this month.

It turns out DeCapite, who moved to Williamsburg in the late '80s, is intimately familiar with the Newsroom's block; he wrote his taxi-driver novel, *Through the Windshield*, at 158 Grand, when crack dealers stowed their product in the wheel wells of cars. "It was so long ago that I wrote that novel across the street that I wrote it on a typewriter," he recalled. "Not only that, somebody bothered to steal the typewriter out the window." That wasn't DeCapite's only memory of the block's seedier days.

There was a bakery next door to here. It was an all-night bakery and I didn't really think much about that. It didn't seem suspicious to me — I don't know, I didn't think about it much, just figured it's New York, it's the city that never sleeps and so the bakery's open all night but then there was a shooting in there one night and when the cops came they tore down the ceiling which was full of heroin. That was right next to here. There was, you know, hookers checking their lipstick in the car mirrors. This whole neighborhood, there wasn't really anything at all going on, there was a couple bars down near the subway. There must've been a restaurant that was open at night but I can't remember one. They didn't serve food at Teddy's in those days. You know, it was just kind of bleak out here, really. What it had to recommend it was that it was cheap and you could keep a car here.

Of course, the neighborhood has changed since those days (boy, are there restaurants!), and it gets its fair share of mockery for it. Spinelli, who has lived there since 1999 (the year his recently published novel *Killing Williamsburg* is set in) addressed that point.



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Spinelli: *If people are hating on Williamsburg, my question would be, “Which Williamsburg are you hating on? Because it’s too big now to be lumped into just one thing. and oftentimes when you do hear people hating on it, they’re like, “Oh, the fucking hipsters,” and I’m like, “Man, I see a lot more people around that don’t really fit into that category. I don’t even know what that category means anymore but I’m pretty sure hipster doesn’t mean someone in his mid-40s who has a corporate job and two kids and lives in a fucking giant-ass loft building right on the water. Like, I don’t think you can call that guy a hipster. Pat Kiernan lives out here now! I mean half the time I read anything in the New Yorker and they talk about some famous celebrity they’re hanging out in Williamsburg. Are these people hipsters? is Zoe Kravitz a hipster? Maybe, but she’s sort of earned that? or was born into?*

DeCapite: *I don’t know who she is.*

Spinelli: *Lenny Kravitz’s daughter, apparently she lives around here.*

DeCapite: *Oh, oh. She’s a hipster. [laughter]*

Spinelli: *But I would ask, there’s so many more people, just by the numbers now in this neighborhood because of the high rises and the rezoning that I don’t feel like you can just categorize it as one thing. I mean Pat Kiernan isn’t in the same social circle as all of Jake’s friends who are all in three bands and yet they’re both Williamsburg, so what are we talking about? Which part are you going to hate on? At this point you gotta decide.*

Tomsky: *Yeah, I agree, people need to shut up if they’re talking shit about Williamsburg. Just shut the fuck up. [Laughter] It’s great: go to Ohio and check back in and see which one you like better.*



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