

**Celebrate Brooklyn**  
**Speech for Sam Ramirez**

It's evenings and events like this that prove that Brooklyn is one of the greatest places in the world to live.

Here we are sitting in Prospect Park – a botanical paradise in the middle of a bustling, vibrant city. And we're about to listen to Maceo Parker – one of the most acclaimed musicians of our time.

Where else can you do this?

I'm proud to have been named Brooklyn's Man of the Year, and I'd like to thank Joe Mino and Frank Marciello for their gracious words about me. But I have to say, I'm prouder to call myself a Brooklynite.

I grew up here...went to P.S. 5...then on to Boys' High School in Bedford Stuyvesant...and finally, St. Francis College in Brooklyn Heights. Brooklyn is in my blood.

I know that Brooklyn is more than a place to live. It's a city that shapes our lives.

My Brooklyn is home to Nathan's, which has the best-tasting hot dogs on the planet, Barge Music under the Brooklyn Bridge, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, which has hosted groundbreaking artists of all types since 1861.

My Brooklyn is a place where kids play stickball and punchball with Spaulding's until dusk... where there's always a game of ring-o-leave-o or Johnny on the Pony going on. My Brooklyn is where you ride the Cyclone for an inexpensive thrill and swim with the waves at Riis Park and Jones Beach.

My Brooklyn is a place where the whole neighborhood helped raise a child – and if that child misbehaved, the parents knew about it in a Brooklyn minute.

My Brooklyn is home of Junior's Cheesecake and penny candy. And my Brooklyn is home of the Dodgers and Ebbets Field.

But one of the greatest things about Brooklyn is that it's always reinventing itself. Every generation gives something to this special place, and that enriches the diverse cultural fabric we all enjoy.

In fact, one out of four Americans can trace their roots to Brooklyn. And if you take a look at the Brooklyn Celebrity Path in these very gardens, you'll see that there's no shortage of famous people from here: Woody Allen, Issac Asimov, Lauren Bacall, Mel Brooks, Aaron Copland, Tony Danza, Richard Dreyfuss, George Gershwin, Arlo Guthrie, Harry Houdini, Vince Lombardi, Floyd Paterson, Max Roach, Walt Whitman, and so many others.

Brooklyn truly touches us to the core.

Brooklyn makes us open-minded. Tolerant. Worldly.

Brooklyn makes us smart, savvy, and sophisticated. And Brooklyn makes us strong, determined, and tenacious.

Brooklyn makes spirited men and women, and we Brooklynites, in turn, give a little back to this wonderful place that we call home.

Celebrate Brooklyn is an example of the best of this city has to offer. It's one of New York's longest-running, outdoor performing arts festivals – and it only costs three bucks to get in.

Now that's really the essence of Brooklyn.

It's truly an honor to be Brooklyn's Man of the Year and help kick off Celebrate Brooklyn with Maceo Parker.

Thanks for listening...thanks for loving Brooklyn...and enjoy the show!

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