

METRO NEWS

News Bureau (718) 822-1174 · Fax (718) 822-1562 · NYDailyNews.com/nylocal



**Heard it
hear first**

Learn more about the World
Voices Project at:

[NYDailyNews.com/
nylocal](http://NYDailyNews.com/nylocal)

Visitors to World Voices Project yesterday at Pier 17 take headphones to listen to Universal World Declaration of Human Right in various languages. Photos by Sam Costanza

Get your earful on human rights

BY KAMELIA ANGELOVA
DAILY NEWS WRITER

MULTILINGUAL New Yorkers are speaking up for human rights. An audio installation at South Street Seaport features the Universal Declaration of Human Rights read in some 50 languages.

"I wanted to rely on common humanity," said Brenda Ray, who started the World Voices Project two years ago. "I love the sound of the human voice and listening to languages that I don't speak. The way people talk, their rhythm tells a story."

Available in about 335 languages, the declaration is arguably the most translated document in the world and a fitting topic for the sonic project.

Apart from the popular Romance languages, the free exhibit at Pier 17 offers excerpts of the declaration's 30 articles in Tigrinya of Eritrea, Amharic of Ethiopia, and Shona of Zimbabwe among others.

But Ray, of the East Village, did not trek the world to record the tongues. Most of the voices came from New

York immigrants — family, friends and strangers — who wanted their language heard.

"People are thrilled to see their language represented, and are equally disappointed when they can't find it," said Ray, a film sound engineer.

"This city has a diversity and integration that make this project possible without traveling."

The World Voices' display, designed pro bono by the architectural design firm ArchiCulture, attracts hundreds of visitors daily who can listen to a particular language on designated headphones, suspended from a grid above. Each device has a tag with background information about origin and popularity of the language.

"What is Igbo?" said Stephanía Louigeán, 16, of Canarsie, looking sheepishly at the headphones for the language spoken by 17 million Nigerians. "I've never even heard of half of the languages they have here."

While Louigeán found a comfort zone listening to French, her friend, Sana Javáid, 16, searched for her tongue.

"Here it is — Urdu!" she said. "I am glad they have it."

Ray hopes to record at least 10 more languages before the declaration's 60th anniversary in December. The project is slated to include a Bulgarian reading contributed by this reporter, Burmese and Navaho.

The exhibit runs through Sunday from noon to 7 p.m. today and from noon to 9 p.m. over the weekend.