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**Bronx Council on the Arts presents a Reading by Writer Joe Flood on August 15th
at the Bronx Library Center as part of BCA's Bronx Indie Artist Series**

(Bronx, NY – July 23, 2009) The Bronx Council on the Arts and the Bronx Library Center present a reading by author and BRIO winner Joe Flood at the Bronx Library Center (310 East Kingsbridge Road in the Bronx) on August 15th from 6:00-7:30pm. Joe will read excerpts from his upcoming book *The Fires* (Riverhead Books, 2010) for which he won his BRIO award for non-fiction. The reading, a segment of BCA's Bronx Indie Artist Series, is open to the public and admission is free. The library center is wheelchair accessible.

The Fires

The RAND Corporation had an alluring proposal for a city on the brink of economic collapse: Using their computer models—which had been developed for and successfully implemented in military operations—New York City could save millions of dollars by streamlining public services. The RAND boys were the best and brightest, and bore all the sheen of post-War American success. Meanwhile, New York City seemed old-fashioned, insular, and corrupt—and the new mayor was eager for outside help, especially something as new and infallible as “computer modeling.” A deal was struck: RAND would begin their first civilian effort with the FDNY.

Throughout the 1970s, a series of fires swept through the South Bronx, the Lower East Side, Harlem, and Brooklyn, displacing over 600,000 people and killing over 2,000 citizens and dozens of firefighters. Conventional wisdom would blame arson, but intentionally set fires were only a tiny fraction of the destruction. This was the result of something altogether different: the intentional withdrawal of fire protection from the City's poorest neighborhoods—all based on RAND's computer modeling techniques.

The Fires tells the story of how the good intentions of an ambitious, working class fire chief, a charismatic mayor and his technocratic successor, and the RAND Corporation went so disastrously wrong—and also reveals how RAND's formulas were inextricably woven into the fabric of the late 20th and 21st century city. At a time when our country faces an economic climate not seen since the 1970s, and looks for new solutions, new heroes, and new cityscapes, *The Fires* could not be a more salient book.

Joe Flood is a journalist who has spent the last seven years researching the facts and implications of the epidemic of fires that swept through New York City in the 1970s. A Massachusetts native, Joe first learned about New York's 1970s bankruptcy and fire epidemic while reporting a story for *Doubletake* magazine. After graduating from Harvard College in 2004, he worked as a reporter for the *New York Sun* and as a high school English teacher at the Red Cloud Indian School in Pine Ridge, South Dakota. In 2005 he moved to New York City and later to the Mott Haven section of the Bronx to research and write *The Fires*, which will be published by Riverhead Books in the spring of 2010. He is happy to report that his frequent walks to Yankee Stadium in a Red Sox jersey have yielded nothing worse than a few good-natured jeers.

The Bronx Library Center is located at 310 East Kingsbridge Road at Briggs Avenue. For directions, call 718-579-4244, e-mail bronxlibrarycenter@nypl.org, or visit www.nypl.org/branch/local/bx/fdc.cfm.

The Bronx Indie Artist Series is designed to encourage artists and arts collectives to explore new performance sites and to get closer to their audience thus increasing community participation and fostering an environment for the arts to thrive. As such, the series will accomplish a unique goal by filling a large gap in the community arts marketplace while giving a voice to quality professional performing artists of all disciplines.

The Bronx Council on the Arts, a private non-profit membership organization is the officially designated cultural agency of the Bronx. For over 45 years, BCA has been providing quality cultural services and arts programs to a multicultural constituency of our borough. The mission of the Bronx Council on the Arts is to encourage and increase the public awareness and participation in the arts and to nurture the development of artists and arts and cultural organizations. For more information about BCA or its many programs and activities, call 718-931-9500 x35, e-mail lydia@bronxarts.org or visit www.bronxarts.org.

This program was made possible with funding by the New York State Council on the Arts, the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs Greater New York Arts Development Fund, Department of Youth & Community Development, Scherman Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, Borough President Ruben Diaz, Jr., Council Members Maria del Carmen Arroyo and James Vacca, and the New York State Council on the Arts.

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The Bronx Writers' Center • Bronx Cultural Card • Longwood Art Gallery • BCA Development Corporation

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Writer Joe Flood will read excerpts from his upcoming book *The Fires* at the Bronx Library Center from 6:00-7:30pm on Saturday, August 15th. This reading is a segment of the Bronx Council on the Arts' Bronx Indie Artist Series. Admission is free. All are welcome.

Photo courtesy of Joe Flood.