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*Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations*. Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, NY. Jaime-Jin Lewis, Executive Director; Emily Potter-Ndiaye, Director of Education; Julia Lipkins, Oral History Project Archivist. <http://cbbg.brooklynhistory.org>. Accessed November 15, 2017.

The face of the United States is changing, and multiracial and multiethnic Americans are leading that charge. According to US Census Bureau data, between 2000 and 2010 the population of white and black multiracial people doubled, while multiracial white-Asian Americans increased by 87 percent. The multiracial Asian American Pacific Islander population is the fastest growing AAPI subgroup in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Legislation and popular culture have slowly mirrored the change in the racial demographics of people living in the United States to become more inclusive. Until the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Loving v. Virginia* on June 12, 1967, interracial marriage was a crime in many states. Often the multiracial and multiethnic children of those unions were deemed social travesties and considered outside the bounds of racial categories that valued and reinforced racial purity. In the last fifty years, not only have intermarried people and their children become normalized and more accepted within society, their experiences have been legitimized through the kind of work the Brooklyn Historical Society is doing with its digital exhibition *Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations*.

The Brooklyn Historical Society created a website that is inclusive, informative, and accurate. The site is organized into three major sections called Learn, Listen, and Discuss. This framework gives virtual visitors an opportunity to approach the topic based on their interests and level of understanding of the topic. Articles within the site provide history and context to expand on themes such as popular culture, politicized issues, and the race question on the census, and the authors range from individuals and scholars to community organizations. There are numerous factors to consider during the exhibit curation process, not only content, but also feasibility, artistic and aesthetic representation, balance, interactive components, and visitor age appropriateness. The Brooklyn Historical Society paid attention to these details. Curating a digital exhibit has additional challenges, such as limitations in the presentation of artifacts, lack of tactile activities, and visitor freedom to view content out of sequence. It is evident that the Brooklyn Historical Society invested careful planning and research into the development of this exhibition to overcome these limitations and take advantage of the digital space. Visitors

1 Elizabeth Hoeffel, Sonya Rastogi, Myoung Ouk Kim, and Hasan Shahid, US Census Brief, "The Asian Population: 2010," March 2012, 4, <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-11.pdf>; Paul Ong, Jonathan Ong, and Elena Ong, "The Future of Asian America in 2040," August 4, 2015, 3, [http://luskin.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/AA2040\\_report.pdf](http://luskin.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/AA2040_report.pdf); Pew Research Center, "Multiracial in America: Proud, Diverse and Growing in Numbers," Washington, DC, June 11, 2015, 6, [http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2015/06/2015-06-11\\_multiracial-in-america\\_final-updated.pdf](http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/files/2015/06/2015-06-11_multiracial-in-america_final-updated.pdf).

to the site can take a cursory look or a deep dive into the material, which is informative on both national and local levels.

*Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations* uses oral histories to create an accurate representation of intermarried and mixed-race people from their own perspective—not from an outsider’s assumptions and inferences about mixed-race identity. Manissa McCleave Maharawal writes, “Oral history allows for multiplicity: for the varied, nuanced, and complicated stories of identity to be told—not flattened to static racial categories.”<sup>2</sup> Complicated stories on the site are told in the rich and personal voices of mixed-race individuals. The interviews are organized around topics relating to multiraciality and the content is categorized by themes such as identity, religion, laws, food, and love. Under the section Learn, a subsection on exhibitions centers on mixed-race communities, which are often marginalized, out of view in mainstream spaces, or rendered as two-dimensional inauthentic representations. Institutions tend to focus on monoracial communities and their perspectives, overlooking growing multiracial and multiethnic segments within those communities and their stories and cultural artifacts. Konrad Ng, former director of the Smithsonian Asia Pacific American Center, emphasized, “Museums can use online popular culture to empower minority communities in ways that circumvent the barriers that have prevented the acquisition of meaningful objects about their experience.”<sup>3</sup> The Brooklyn Historical Society has created a real place for teaching and showcasing the mixed-race experience with interactive content.

To its credit, the Brooklyn Historical Society has been able to incorporate the tremendous diversity of issues relating to the multiracial and multiethnic experience in a variety of formats. Furthermore, the site content is genuinely multiracial and multiethnic: it discusses race from the perspective of Asian adoptees to the role of religion in mixed-faith households—an area often understudied in comparison to mixed-race identity. It gives the viewers a chance to think about what decisions families make in terms of identity not only within mixed-race households but also within dual minority and multi-faith ones. The stories are authentic, and the questions posed on the site allow viewers to expand their understanding of race in the United States.

The accuracy of representation is important to multiracial, multiethnic, and multicultural communities because of its influence in defining reality and shaping identity. The digital exhibition is designed for viewing on a screen, yet I hope that the Brooklyn Historical Society considers including more ways to access the site, such as podcasts of the content that can be made available for future visitors, since more people are embracing various digital platforms. In addition, this website is a great tool for educators, particularly its section titled Curriculum. Virtual visitors

<sup>2</sup> *Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations*, Brooklyn Historical Society, accessed October 15, 2017, <http://cbbg.brooklynhistory.org/learn/making-space-talk-about-race?page=3#slides>.

<sup>3</sup> Konrad Ng, “Online Asian American Popular Culture, Digitization, and Museums,” in *Global Asian American Popular Cultures*, ed. Shilpa Dave, Leilani Nishime, and Tasha Oren (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 148.

wishing to look into additional materials can rely on the content experts and scholars who contributed to the section titled Further Resources, which is excellent in scope and depth.

It is encouraging to see work like this, and although I cannot speak for the entire multiracial community, I am certain many would like to see more of these kinds of digital exhibitions. I applaud the Brooklyn Historical Society for making the decision to do this project and for carrying out the work to legitimize the perspectives from multiracial and multiethnic voices. We need to keep pushing the boundaries of race and identity, and *Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations* is a good place to begin an educated conversation.

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