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BHS Celebrates Loving Day All Year; Launches New Mixed-Heritage Family Project

June 8, 2011: Brooklyn, NY – Sunday, June 12th is [Loving Day](#), a celebration commemorating the landmark Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia* (1967) that legalized interracial marriage in the United States. BHS will be celebrating mixed-heritage families all year with [Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations \(CBBG\)](#) a public programming series and oral history project about mixed-heritage families, race, ethnicity, culture, and identity, infused with historical perspective.

[Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations](#) is currently planning a project that will culminate in a multi-faceted interpretive website comprised of multi-media mini exhibition and online access to BHS's collection of oral histories collected between 1973 and the present. This fall BHS will present a series of public programs including a 20th Anniversary screening and discussion of *Jungle Fever* at BAM November 15th and much more, so stay tuned!

Forty-four years ago, interracial couples faced prosecution and jail time, or violence, if they happened to cross into one of the sixteen states that prohibited and punished marriages on the basis of racial classifications. Fifty-nine years ago, anti-miscegenation laws were on the books in thirty states. Eighty-one years ago, in 1930, the Hays Code forbade portrayals of interracial romance, curtailing the careers of actors of color like Anna May Wong who could no longer play the romantic leads. In Germany in 1935, *The Nuremberg Laws* were introduced that prohibited marriage between Jewish Germans and other Germans. The only other nation to legislate against intermarriage was Apartheid South Africa in 1949. While interfaith marriages were not legally proscribed in the U.S., interfaith and interclass marriages often met with opposition from family and community.

And yet, in less than two generations since the last anti-miscegenation laws were removed, [a study released last year by the Pew Research Center](#) reports that a record one out of seven new marriages in the United States were between spouses of a different race or ethnicity from one another.

From *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?* (Stanley Kramer, 1967) to Spike Lee's *Jungle Fever* (1991), stories about mixed-heritage romance abound in theater, film, literature, cultural criticism, news media, political cartoons, pop culture, humor, and folklore. These stories powerfully address issues about gender, sexuality, class, power, community, nationality, and identity. Despite popular culture's fascination with this topic, scholars agree that all too rarely do we hear the *real* stories of mixed-heritage families' personal experiences, which can add perspective and complexity to historical moments and movements.



✎ Honor Campy's Parents: Brooklyn catcher Roy Campanella watched proudly as Philadelphia's Bright Hope Baptist Church honored his parents, John Campanella (l.), an Italian, and Mrs. Campanella, (receiving plaque from Mrs. Irene Bennett) for raising their son (Roy) in best principles of sportsmanship. Nephew Lawrence Campanella was also present.

Brooklyn Dodger, Roy Campanella, with his Italian American father & African American mother; Jet Magazine, 6/11/ 1953

Which is why BHS looks forward to collecting life history interviews with mixed-heritage families in Brooklyn and, as CBBG scholarly advisor Suleiman Osman said, "exploring the historically fluid borders, cultural hybridity, and overlapping identities of Brooklyn's communities."

[Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations](#) is made possible through generous funding from [New York Council for the Humanities](#) and the [National Endowment for the Humanities](#).