



**BROOKLYN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**
150 YEARS

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**BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY RECEIVES PRESTIGIOUS GRANT FOR CROWN HEIGHTS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

*The Institute of Museum and Library Services recognizes local institution for its plan to document a
neighborhood's history through the act of listening*

September 28, 2016 Brooklyn, NY—Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) is pleased to announce it has been awarded Museums for America grant of \$129,600 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). IMLS is an independent federal agency that aims to improve museums' service to the public. The funding will support Voices of Crown Heights, an oral history project conducted in partnership with Brooklyn Movement Center and Weeksville Heritage Center.

Voices of Crown Heights is a multidimensional project that explores the history and future of Crown Heights, a neighborhood that has taken on continued national significance in conversations about ethnic relations, racial justice, and urban renewal. Grounded in the oral history concept of listening, the project will explore overlooked narratives in Brooklyn Historical Society's existing collections, and collect new oral histories that reflect the community as it exists today. BHS will present these narratives through a variety of public programs, podcasts and a web-based listening portal, engaging an audience of listeners in conversations about the past, present and future of the neighborhood.

Voices of Crown Heights will focus on listening as a vital tool for creating empathy and learning, and emphasize the importance of critically examining history in order to understand current events. Brooklyn Historical Society is pleased to embark on this project with the help of two additional Brooklyn institutions. Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn's largest African-American cultural institution, is a multidisciplinary museum dedicated to preserving the history of the 19th century African American community of Weeksville, Brooklyn - one of America's first free black communities. Brooklyn Movement Center is a membership-led, direct-action, community organizing body based in Central Brooklyn (Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights and the surrounding area). It brings together residents to develop local leadership, identify important issues in their lives, win concrete improvements in the community, and build power.

"We are grateful to IMLS for their support as we embark on this important project," said Deborah Schwartz,

President, BHS. “As a 153-year-old Brooklyn institution, we aim to create an archive that is reflective of all whose personal history is shared by the borough in which we live. Through the act of listening, we honor voices that have too often been overlooked in previously existing records. These new oral histories will enrich our community, providing new context and perspective on historic events that have shaped Brooklyn as we know it today.”

“Crown Heights is one of New York City’s most rapidly changing neighborhoods, and Voices of Crown Heights will allow us to document and amplify the voices—old and new—that have made the neighborhood what it is today,” said Zaheer Ali, BHS Oral Historian. “With the support from IMLS, we look forward to working with our community partners and other members of the Crown Heights community to create opportunities for listening to these voices as the first, crucial step in preserving Crown Heights’s past and thinking about its future.”

“Museums play a vital role in their communities supporting learning experiences and inquiry for people of all ages, fostering civic engagement, and serving as stewards of collections that represent the nation’s cultural, historical and scientific heritage,” said IMLS Director Dr. Kathryn K. Matthew. “The federal support provided by IMLS will help museums all over the country, enabling their best efforts to provide the highest level of public service.”

About Institute of Museums and Library Services

The mission of IMLS is to inspire libraries and museums to advance innovation, lifelong learning, and cultural and civic engagement. It provides leadership through research, policy development, and grant making.

About Brooklyn Historical Society

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement and community outreach.

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