



**BROOKLYN  
HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY  
150 YEARS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY RECEIVES GRANT FROM NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST FOR *VOICES OF CROWN HEIGHTS* ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

***BHS marks 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Crown Heights riot with documentary project on neighborhood's past and present***

December 9, 2015 Brooklyn, NY— Brooklyn Historical Society has been awarded a prestigious grant of \$150,000 from the New York Community Trust to process oral histories of Crown Heights residents from 1991 through the present. This multi-year project will explore the history and future of Crown Heights, a neighborhood that has taken on continued national significance in conversations on ethnic relations, racial justice and urban renewal. The completed collection will be made widely available to the public, immersing diverse audiences in unheard voices of the past and present that challenge any singular, linear narrative of Crown Height's history.

The New York Community Trust (NYCT) is one of the country's oldest community foundations, founded in 1924 to fund the nonprofits that make New York City a vital and secure place. With this NYCT grant, BHS is pleased to extend its mission of making the vibrant history of Brooklyn tangible, relevant, and meaningful for today's diverse communities, and for generations to come.

*Voices of Crown Heights* builds on BHS's award-winning *Crossing Borders, Bridging Generations* (CBBG) oral history project, which powerfully documents how identity shapes life experiences and intercultural relations. This thematic framework is key to understanding the dynamics of Crown Heights, including the events that led up to and followed the 1991 riot, and the urban revitalization and accompanying gentrification since. Grounded in the oral history practice of listening, BHS's project focuses on unheard voices of Crown Heights by exploring the overlooked narratives in existing oral history collections, and collecting new oral histories of previously overlooked people and communities.

"We are grateful to NYCT for supporting this project to record oral histories of Crown Heights. The Brooklyn Historical Society is dedicated to making Brooklyn's history engaging and accessible to a broad and diverse audience," notes BHS President, Deborah Schwartz. "Making these collections available on-line and at listening

stations located in Crown Heights will begin the process of learning and careful listening that is at the heart of our oral history program, and our commitment to the neighborhood of Crown Heights.”

BHS has 110 Crown Heights-related interviews collected from 1993 to 1995 and 2010 which will be audited, transcribed, processed, digitized and catalogued. Additionally, oral historian Zaheer Ali will conduct 12 new interviews with Crown Heights community leaders tackling issues of urban space, race, ethnicity, inequity, and activism. BHS is one of the few institutions to employ the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS), a digital tool that provides researchers the unique ability to simultaneously conduct keywords searches in both the oral history audio recording and transcript. A series of public programs presented at BHS will further explore the twenty-fifth anniversary of the riot and the lessons learned since.

### **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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