

# Facing and Voicing **DIVERSITY**



Fig. 1

## A Student Activity Guide

based on the exhibition

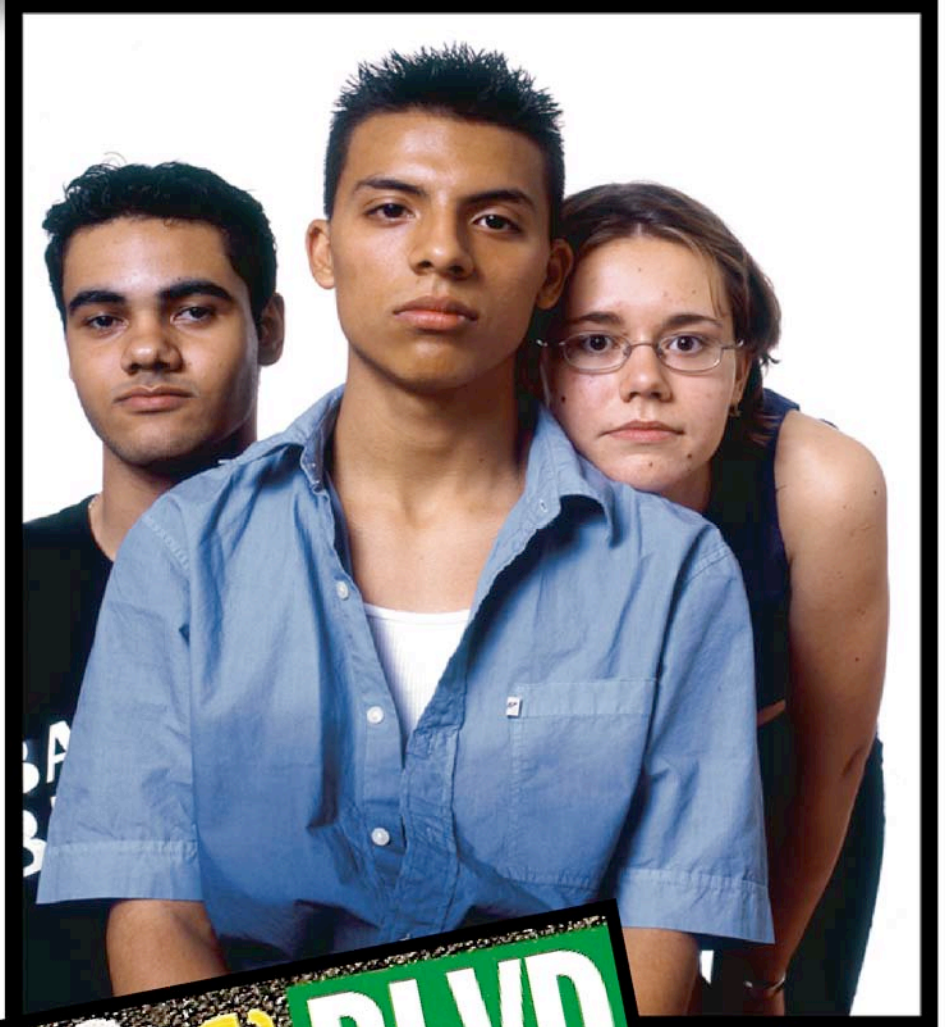


Fig. 2

# CROSSING BLVD

strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new america

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**Godwin-Ternbach Museum  
Queens College**

**February 4 to June 28, 2008**

Fig. 1: Photograph by Warren Lehrer ©2003 from opening pages of the book *Crossing the BLVD: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a New America* (W. W. Norton & Co.)

Fig. 2: Photograph by Warren Lehrer ©2003 of Mohamed Attia, Jonathan Barba, Joanna Pittner from *Crossing the BLVD*.



# 1 Pre-Museum Activity

## Faces and Places of Diversity

### Look & Discuss



Look at Fig. 1. This work of art is a **group portrait**. Have you ever made a **portrait**, or work of art of a person, before? Who was it of? Look carefully at the people in this portrait by Warren Lehrer. How are they similar to each other? How are they different?

All three people were students at the **International High School at LaGuardia Community College**, Queens, NY. Why do you think this school is called "international"? These students are **new immigrants**. What is an **immigrant**?

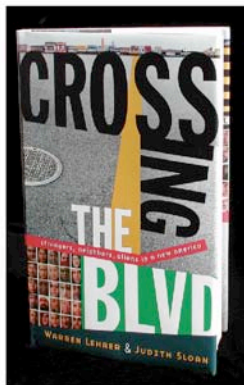
Mohamed (left) was born in **Kuwait**, moved to **Egypt** when he was 7 and to Queens, NY when he was 13. Jonathan (center) was born in **Ecuador** and moved to Queens, NY when he was 11. Joanna (right) was born in **Poland** and moved to Queens, NY when she was 13. Find these countries on a map. What continents are they on? Who had the longest journey to the United States?

Looking at this **photograph**, how do you think Mohamed, Jonathan, and Joanna are feeling? What do you see that makes you say that? Have you or any of your friends or family ever had to move? Where did you move to/from? Was it from another town, state, or country? How did you feel when you moved? What makes it difficult when people move to different places, especially different countries?

### Explore Your Story

The exhibit at the Museum explores the **diversity** of people's **heritages** in Queens, NY by sharing the individual stories of many **new immigrants** living there. What is a person's **heritage**? Explore yours! *On a separate sheet of paper, test your own knowledge of your family history. Answer the following questions as best you can. (You might want to ask family members to help you with any of the questions you didn't know the answers to.)*

1. What country or countries is your family from originally?
2. What language(s) did/do you and your family speak?
3. Who was the first in your family to immigrate to the United States?
4. When did your family immigrate to the United States?



### Did You Know?

**According to the U.S. Census, 1990 and 2000 that Queens is the most ethnically diverse place in the United States!**

Queens is sometimes called a "modern-day Ellis Island," and its residents speak upwards of 138 different languages! According to some statistics, 162 languages.

The exhibition *Crossing the BLVD: strangers, neighbors, in a new America* is part of a larger multimedia project including: The Book and CD: *Crossing the BLVD* by Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, 2003 W. W. Norton & Co. (left). Add your story to the interactive Website: <http://www.crossingtheblvd.org>



# 2

## Museum Activity: Faces, Places, and Voices

### Look and Discuss



Fig. 3

Look at the exhibition. How many **photographs** are there? Can you find Fig. 1? How many other **portraits** are there? How are they similar? How are they different?

You can only tell so much about a person by looking at their photograph. That is why the artists who created this exhibition decided to show us more than just their faces. They took photographs of the new immigrants and also **interviewed** each of them and printed and recorded them in their **book** (opposite page). Have you ever interviewed anyone? Why do you think people interview others?

This exhibit is **interactive**. You can listen to the artists' interviews at the sound stations. Want to share your own story? Go inside the **mobile story booth** (Fig. 3). It takes your photo and records your story for others!

### Whose Voice is it?

Look carefully at all of the portraits. The quotes below are from interviews with five of these people. Can you match up the voices with the faces? Write the name of the person you think said each one under each quote.

(The names are next to the portraits.)

"I went through all the steps with my music from age of ten when my parents picked the accordion for me... I know I'll keep accordion. I'm good at it naturally, so I hate it."

For the restaurant...outside I put the Greek columns and the Islamic window with a lotus flower and the pyramid from the Pharaohs' time, and the eye of Horus..."

"The children are more behaved in my country, and they listen. They respect their teachers and parents. Not here."

"This saxophone is from the '20s... I bought it for a thousand dollars. Now I wouldn't even sell it for four."

"I live to dance. To dance, to dance, to dance... anything to dance."

Quotes above are from *Crossing the BLVD* by Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan, 2003.

Answers (clockwise from top left):  
Yury Lemeshev; Moustafa Rahman;  
Miss Eileen; Arthur Gulikarov; Ori Kaplan

### WORDS TO KNOW

**Group Portrait:** A work of art of a group of people or animals.

**Immigrant:** A person who was born in one country and moves to another to live.

**New Immigrants:** People who came to the U.S. after the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments, which ended policies that gave preference to "white" Western Europeans.

**Photograph:** A work of art created by using a camera as an artistic tool.

**Diversity:** Differences among multiple people, places, or things. (ie. peoples' different **heritages**).

**Heritage (or Cultural Heritage):** artifacts or attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, and maintained in the present for the benefit of future generations.

**Collage:** A work of art created by cutting, arranging, and gluing pieces of paper or fabric together.

**Interactive:** Something that interacts with, or responds to, its users (or viewers).



# 3

## Post-Museum Activity

### Face & Voice Yourself

#### Look and Discuss



Discuss how the exhibition shows the **cultural diversity** of new immigrants in Queens, N.Y. Why do you think the artists used portraiture and interviews? What do you think it would be like without the interview? What do you think it would be like without the photograph? What does it mean to have both?

## Photographic Portrait

Fig. 4

How would you describe the backgrounds of Lehrer's portraits? Why do you think he used plain white?

Create your own photographic portrait with a partner. Make a **backdrop** in your classroom with white paper or a sheet on the wall. Bring in an item from home or create one that tells about your family's heritage. (ie. photograph, map, letter, flag). Items might also tell the viewer more about your interests. Pose and use **facial expression** to express your feelings and add meaning. Have a partner take your photograph using a **camera**. Print on 8.5 x 11" paper.

Look at the sample (Fig. 4) for ideas. What is the girl holding? Look at their **color** and **pattern**. What country might this girl's family be from? What else might she be interested in? How is she feeling? What do you see that makes you say that?

## Quote Yourself: Word Collage

Select some of your answers to the questions from the **Pre-Museum Activity** to create an original **collage**. If desired, use a **dictionary** to translate some words into the native language(s) of your family.

Use **scissors** to cut letters out of **magazines**. **Glue** them together on a sheet of **5" x 8.5" drawing paper (or 5" x 11")** to fit below your portrait. If desired, add written words. Look at the sample for ideas. What words were translated?



## Mount your own Interactive Exhibit

Display your photographs and quotes in a prominent location in your school so everyone can learn about the diverse backgrounds of all the students in your class.

### Make the exhibit interactive!

Line up all of the photographic portraits with a number next to each one, but mix up the quotes underneath. Place a number next to each portrait and affix an envelope on the wall under each quote. Invite others to write down the number of the portrait they think matches with each quote, placing the number in the envelope. When the exhibit is over, look in the envelopes to see how well your schoolmates know you!

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