America's melting pot in pictures: Photographer captures heartwarming portraits of interracial couples

- **Yael Ben-Zion started compiling the book after coming across family photos of an intermarried family**

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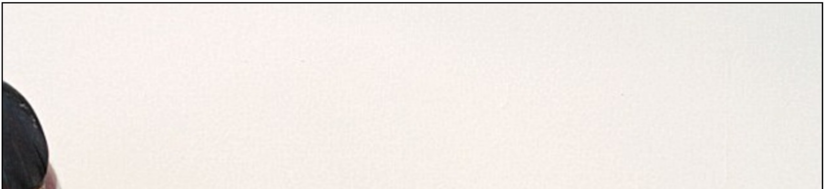
With the current president a product of an interracial marriage, it's easy to forget how recently miscegenation was taboo in the United States and how mixed-race couples still face hardships today.

Photographer **Yael Ben-Zion** illustrates the modern challenges facing these couples in new book 'Intermarried'.

The origins of 'Intermarried' go all the way back to 2007 when she was working on a different project, and interviewed former opera singer Beatrice Rippy at her home, coming across some family pictures.



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"Frames" Photographer Yael Ben-Zion first started Intermarried in 2009, inspired by family photos she encountered interviewing a former opera singer who had married outside her race at a time when the practice was banned in 20 states

'Her late husband Carroll Hollister, was a piano player, and from the many family photos in her apartment, I realized they were intermarried.'

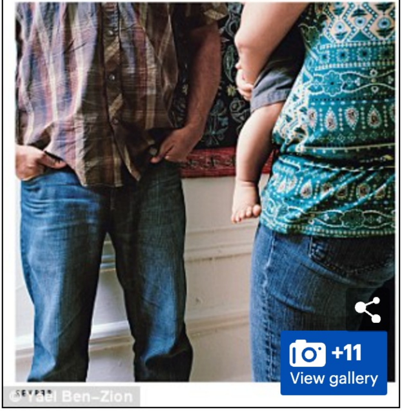
While they didn't initially talk about Rippy's marriage, the idea stuck with Ben-Zion and a few years later she decided to start Intermarried.

INTERMARRIED
YAEL BEN-ZION

When Intermarried started to take shape, Ben-Zion asked Rippy about her marriage to Carroll in the 1950s, when interracial marriages were banned in more than 40 U.S. states.

'In response, she put on her great smile and told me that they always did things their way.'

Unfortunately, Ben-Zion was never able to sit down with Rippy for a long interview about her marriage since she passed away soon after.



Out now: Ben-Zion's latest book is available for order on Amazon

Thankfully though, Ben-Zion was able to speak with many more couples, starting by first contacting a parenting group in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Upper Manhattan.

Many of the couples identified themselves as mixed and allowed Ben-Zion into their homes to take pictures of their families and the spaces they shared together.

For some, the act of marrying someone outside of their race or religion meant offending their family.

Take Jeff and Ilana Previdi for example. Jeff is Catholic and Ilana Jewish and when they first married her mother and sister refused to attend the wedding.

While Jeff's family showed up for the big day, they were just as critical of the union.

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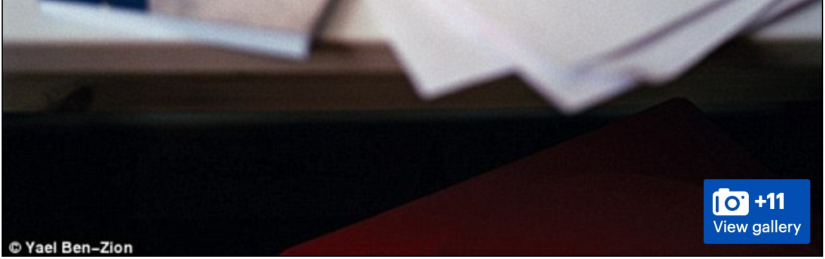
"West Side Story" Families angered: When Catholic-born Jeff Previdi married his Jewish wife Ilana, her parents refused to attend the wedding and his parents were concerned the children would be Jewish

הנסיך הקטן
Le Petit Prince



"The Little Prince" Translation: Mixed-race families allowed Ben-Zion into their homes to document their living spaces. Above two versions of the children's book 'The Little Prince', one in Hebrew and the other in French

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"Morena and Blankito" Mother and son time: Joselin Athanasios and her son recline on the couch at home

'When Jeff told them he wanted to marry me, they did not support it and expressed concern that they would have Jewish grandchildren.'

While both families were concerned about the religious background of any possible grandchildren, it was little Annabel's birth in 2006 that actually brought them together in the end.

Jeff and Ilana's mothers met for the first time at the hospital the day their daughter was born.

For other couples the 'mixing' is less dramatic.

Kari Steeves and husband David Sklar celebrate both Hanukkah and Christmas, which means double the presents.

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"Hanukkah candles and Advent wreath" The upside of having parents with both Christian and Jewish backgrounds? Double the presents during holiday season

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© Yael Ben-Zion

"Murphy bed" Family time: An interracial couple recline on a Murphy bed with their young child

I'M THE
TON / I-215 / FRENCH + SCOTTISH
LEGO NINJAGO
Ziploc
Model-Set
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© Yael Ben-Zion

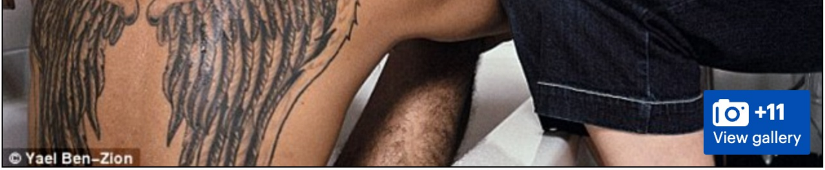
"I'm the French + Scottish" Fusion: The child in the picture above describes himself as part French, part Scottish

And while Aditi Thapar was born in India, and her husband John Leahy back in the U.S. - they still find many commonalities between their respective upbringings.

'Despite our upbringing across the world, there were a remarkable number of similarities. It is pretty scary how similar out parents are and how similar our experiences were growing up,' John said.

Overall, Ben-Zion hopes her latest book will create a 'platform for thinking and talking about issues that are very personal but have cast social and political implications'.

Intermarried is available to order on **Amazon**.



"Baptism" Shared faith: While Ewelina and her husband Richard come from different continents, they share a Catholic faith

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"Sari scarf and doll house" Despite being raised in India and Oregon respectively, Aditi Thapar and John Leahy say their parents are similar and they share many of the same experiences growing up

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"Drawing rings" No diamonds: Jeanne Verdoux and Scottish husband John Gibson drew rings on their fingers when they got married