



COURTESY OF MIXED REMIXED

**Artists from the 2014 festival:**  
**Top left: actresses Erica Gimpel, Whitney Avalon and Khanisha Foster, violinist Mya Greene and actress Victoria Tilford; bottom left: comedian Keegan-Michael Key, poet Aaron Samuels and comedian Jordan Peele.**

stranger through story, that's when we have empathy.' When we can see ourselves in someone who's different, then that's when we fully understand. Through the arts, I think we just have an easier entryway [to talk about race]," she says.

"The festival is also for people who are not mixed race and for people who are not in mixed families," she notes. "And isn't that the most important thing? We don't want to have this insular conversation with [only multiracial people]; we want to have this conversation in the mainstream."

Durrow explains that the festival purposely includes lighthearted elements, such as comedic workshops. "People didn't [used to] think there was anything funny about being mixed. They wouldn't talk about being mixed. There was complete silence around these issues. What I like to say [is], 'It's like we're trying to take the tragic out of mulatto, one joke at a time.'"

Last year's festival brought in nearly 700 attendees from around the country, and Durrow says there's something very unifying about celebrating with others who identify as "in between." "A lot of people say, '[Attending] felt like coming home.' 'It felt like the home I never had.'

"People feel a lot of relief when they come, because, especially for people who are ethnically ambiguous looking, it's hard to quantify to someone how much of a tax there is on how to answer the question, 'What are you?' It's not meant to be hostile, but there's a tax on having to explain your identity every single day," she explains. "[At the festival] no one's looking at your family, going, 'Wait a minute—how do these people fit together?'"

Mixed Remixed is always held around June 12—Loving Day—the anniversary of the landmark 1967 Supreme Court ruling in *Loving v. Virginia* that struck down remaining anti-miscegenation laws.

This year's festival is June 13 at Los Angeles' Japanese American National Museum. Performers and guests include *The Daily Show's* Al Madrigal, author Jamie Ford, singer Donn T and more. [E]

# Mixed Redefining racial diversity remixed

By Hana Medina

FAMILIES HAVE ALWAYS come in all shapes, sizes, colors and backgrounds. But a unique festival in Los Angeles is helping to shift the cultural view of what it means to have a diverse family. While history and cultural stereotypes have often cast the experience of being biracial or multiracial in a contentious light, Mixed Remixed, an annual arts festival, is repositioning it as a source of celebration.

Mixed Remixed showcases "the stories of multiracial Americans and families, the fastest-growing demographic in the U.S.," reports the nonprofit's recent press release. The free one-day event includes panel discussions, workshops, film screenings, readings, and musical and comedic performances. Performers range from emerging artists to professional acts; comedians Keegan-Michael Key and Jordan Peele of Comedy Central's *Key & Peele*, actress Erica Gimpel and many notable writers are among past guests.

Best-selling author Heidi Durrow (*The Girl Who Fell from the Sky*; Algonquin Books, 2011; not available at Costco) founded the festival in 2013, after previously organizing the Mixed Roots Film & Literary Festival. Durrow, who refers to herself as Afro-Viking on account of her African-American and Danish ethnicities, spoke with *The Connection* from her Los Angeles home.

"We get to talk about multiracial and

## MEMBERPROFILE



**Organization:** Mixed Remixed

**Founder:** Heidi Durrow (above)

**Founded:** 2013

**Headquarters:** Los Angeles, California

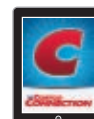
**Website:** [mixedremixed.org](http://mixedremixed.org)

**Email:** [info@mixedremixed.org](mailto:info@mixedremixed.org)

**Comments about Costco:** "Costco has become a go-to place for me when I have family or friends visiting from overseas. It's so big, and the clientele so diverse, it strikes my guests as quintessentially American."—Heidi Durrow

multicultural mixed identity in, not necessarily a positive light, but we get to talk about it in a moment of positivity," she says. "Because I think, too often, when we're talking about race and racial identity and experience, it comes out of these moments of conflict."

While there are many academic studies on the mixed experience, Durrow, a Costco member, says it was important for her to focus the festival on the arts. "We connect through stories. It's the writer Barbara Kingsolver who says, 'It's when we can connect with a theoretical



### In our digital editions

Click here to watch a clip about Mixed Remixed. (See page 11 for details.)