

# *1. The Individual and Society*

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*“All the people like us are we, and everyone else is they.”*

RUDYARD KIPLING

## **OVERVIEW**

**W**e begin to learn our culture - the ways of our society – just after birth. That process is called socialization and it involves far more than schooling. It affects our values, what we consider right and wrong. Our religious beliefs are therefore an integral part of our culture. So is our racial or ethnic heritage. Our culture also shapes the way we work and play. And it makes a difference to the way we view ourselves and others. Psychologist Deborah Tannen warns of our tendency to generalize about the things we observe and the people we encounter. “Generalizations, while capturing similarities,” she points out, “obscure differences. Everyone is shaped by innumerable influences such as ethnicity, religion, class, race, age, profession, the geographical regions they and their relatives have lived in, and many other group identities – all mingled with individual personality and predilection.”<sup>1</sup>

The United States is home to hundreds of different groups, each with its own culture and traditions. It would be impossible to study each group's history in depth. But by focusing on the links between particular individuals and society, Chapter 1 reveals a number of universal principles. In doing so, it raises a number of questions:

- How is our identity formed? To what extent are we defined by our talents, tastes, and interests? By our membership in a particular ethnic group? Our religion? By the nation in which we live? Are we limited by the groups to which we belong or can we expand our horizons? What opportunities do individuals have in our society to expand their horizons? How does one make the most of those opportunities?
- How do our attitudes and beliefs influence our thinking? How does our thinking affect our actions?
- How can we keep our individuality and still be a part of a group?
- How does our tendency to see *us* as unique but *them* as members of groups affect our behavior as well as our attitudes? Do we welcome or fear *them*? When does fear turn to hate?

In exploring these and many of the other questions you will encounter in *Facing History and Ourselves*, it is useful to keep a journal. Unlike a finished work, a journal documents the process of thinking. Much like history itself, it always awaits further entries. A journal also allows a writer to witness his or her own history and consider the way ideas grow and change. For author Joan Didion and many others, writing is a way of examining ideas. She explains, "I write entirely to find out what I'm thinking, what I'm looking at, what I see and what it means."

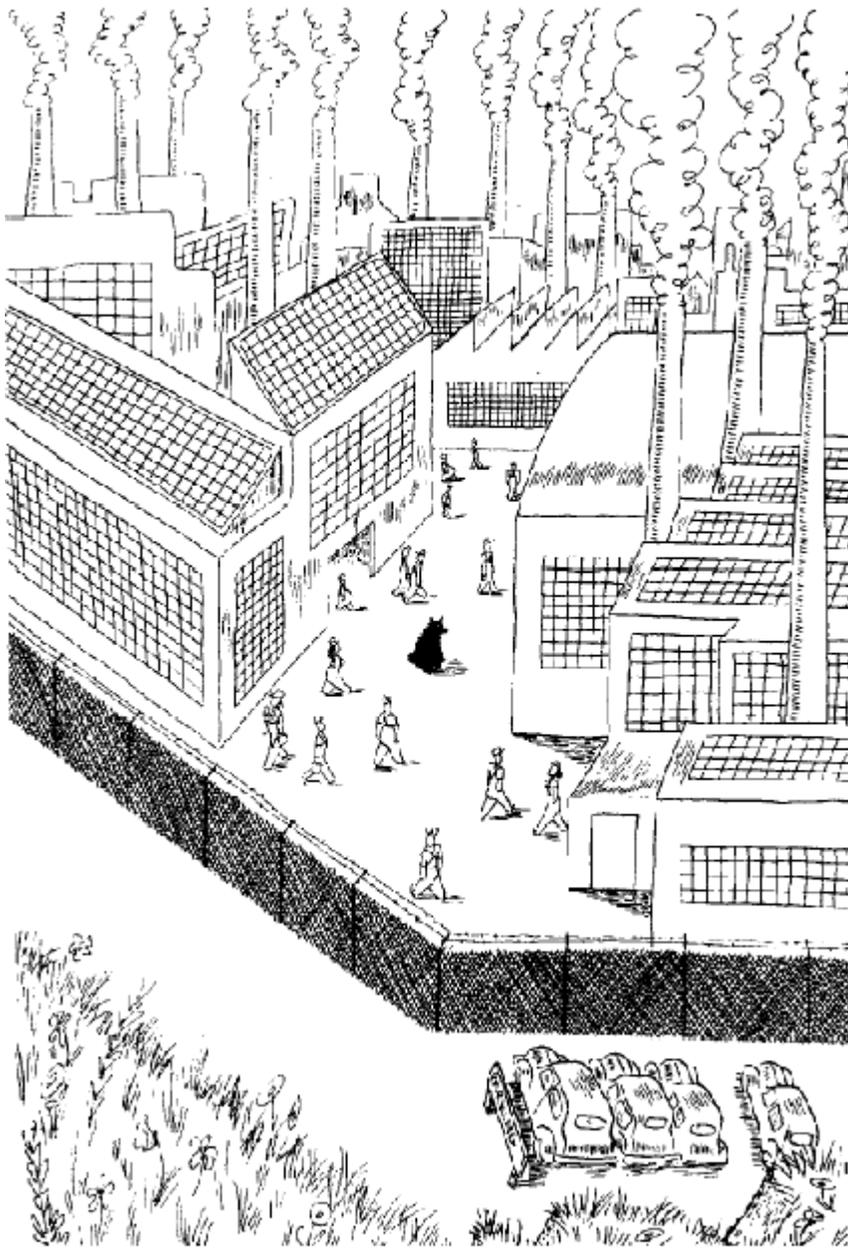
A complete lesson plan for using a journal with this course is available from the Facing History Resource Center, as are copies of journals kept by two teachers and their students.

## READING 1

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### *The Bear That Wasn't*

No two people are exactly alike. Each is an individual with unique talents, interests, and values. At the same time, each also belongs to many different groups. Everywhere, to be human means to live with others. In groups, we meet our most basic needs. In groups, we learn a language, customs, and values. We also satisfy our yearning to belong, receive comfort in times of trouble, and find companions who share our dreams and beliefs. Even as we struggle to define our unique identity, those groups attach labels to us that may differ from those we would choose for ourselves. In the book, *the bear that wasn't*, Frank Tashlin uses words and pictures to describe that process.



*the bear that wasn't* introduces themes and concepts central not only to this chapter but also to subsequent chapters. The reading is abridged from a children's book with many more illustrations. Multiple copies of the book are available in English and French from the Facing History Resource Center.

Once upon a time, in fact it was on a Tuesday, the Bear saw that it was time to go into a cave and hibernate. And that was just what he did. Not long afterward, in fact it was on a Wednesday, lots of workers arrived near that cave. While the Bear slept, they built a great, huge factory.

As winter turned to spring, the Bear awoke and stepped out of his cave. His eyes popped.

Where was the forest?

Where was the grass?

Where were the trees?

Where were the flowers?

WHAT HAD HAPPENED?

“I must be dreaming,” he said. “Of course, I’m dreaming.” But it wasn’t a dream. It was real. Just then the Foreman came out of the factory. “Hey, you get back to work,” he said.

The Bear replied, “I don’t work here. I’m a Bear.”

The Foreman laughed, “That’s a fine excuse for a man to keep from doing any work. Saying he’s a Bear.”

The Bear said, “But, I am a Bear.”

The Foreman stopped laughing. He was very mad.

“Don’t try to fool me,” he said. “You’re not a Bear. You’re a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I’m going to take you to the *General Manager*.”

The General Manager also insisted the Bear was a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat.

The Bear said, “No, you’re mistaken. I am a Bear.”

The General Manager was very mad, too.

The Bear said, “I’m sorry to hear you say that. You see, I am a Bear.”



The Third Vice President was even madder.



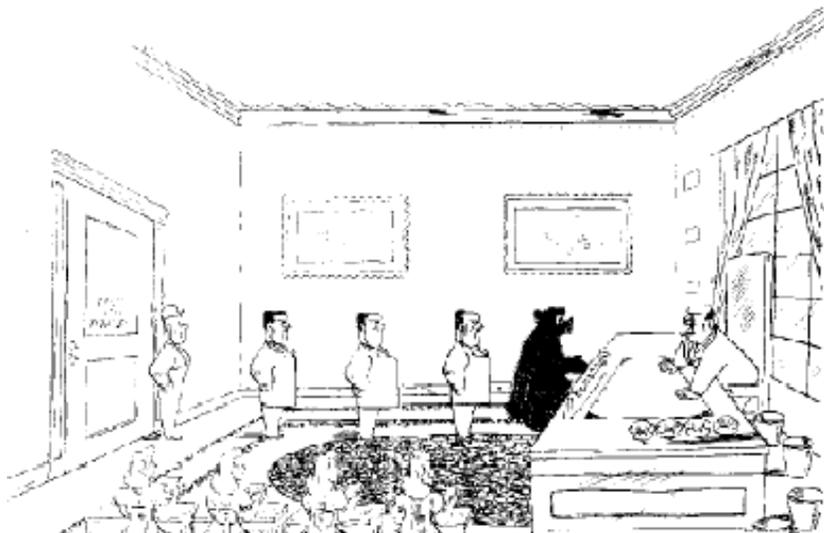
The Second Vice President was more than mad or madder. He was furious.

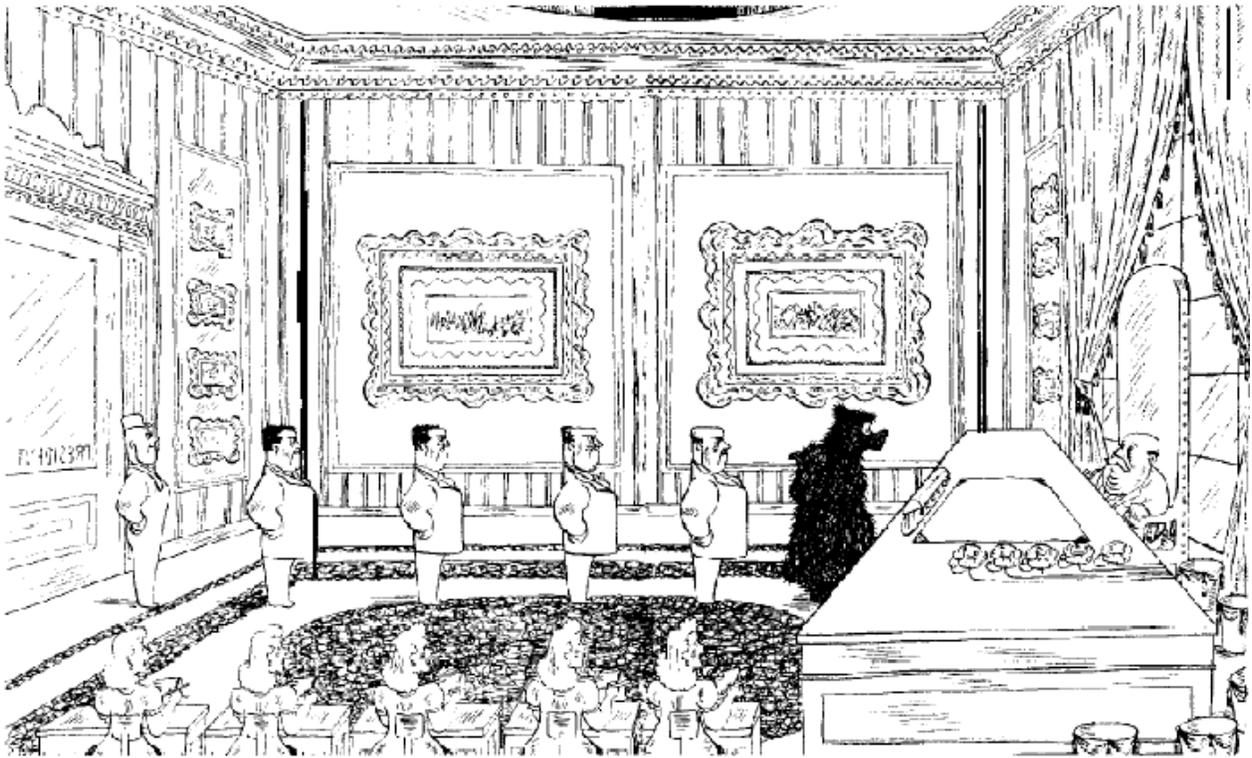


The First Vice President yelled in rage.

He said, "You're not a Bear. You're a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat. I'm going to take you to the *President*."

The Bear pleaded, "This is a dreadful error, you know, because ever since I can remember, I've always been a Bear."





And that is exactly what the Bear told the President.

“Thank you for telling me,” the President said. “You can’t be a Bear. Bears are only in a zoo or a circus. They’re never inside a factory and that’s where you are; inside a factory. So how can you be a Bear?”

The Bear said, “But I am a Bear.”

The President said, “Not only are you a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat, but you are also very stubborn. So I’m going to prove it to you, once and for all, that you are *not* a Bear.”

The Bear said, “But I *am* a Bear.”

The President packed his vice presidents and the Bear into a car and drove to the zoo. The Bears in the zoo said the Bear was not a Bear, because if he were a Bear, he would be inside a cage.

The Bear said, “But I am a Bear.”

So they all left the zoo and drove to the nearest circus.

“Is he a Bear?” the President asked the circus Bears.

The Bears said no. If he were a Bear he would be wearing a little hat with a striped ribbon holding onto a balloon and riding a bicycle.

The Bear said, “But I am a Bear.”

When the President and his vice presidents returned to the factory, they put the Bear to work on a big machine with a lot of other men. The Bear worked on the big machine for many, many months.

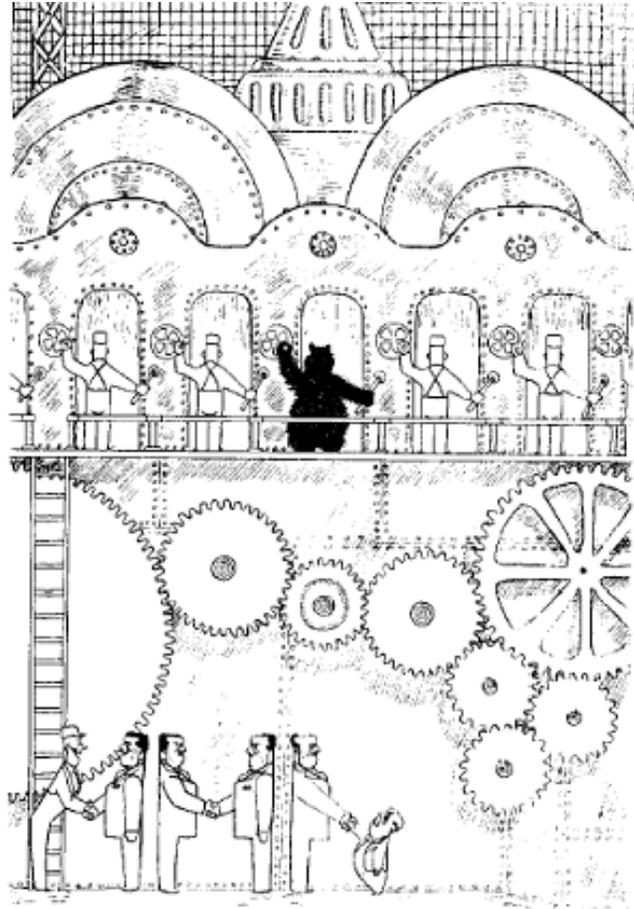
After a long, long time, the factory closed and all the workers went away. The Bear was the last one left. As he left the shut-down factory, he saw geese flying south and the leaves falling from the trees. Winter was coming, he thought. It was time to hibernate.

He found a cave and was about to enter when he stopped. "I can't go in a cave. I'm NOT a Bear. I'm a silly man who needs a shave and wears a fur coat."

As the days grew colder and the snow fell, the Bear sat shivering with cold. "I wish I were a Bear," he thought.

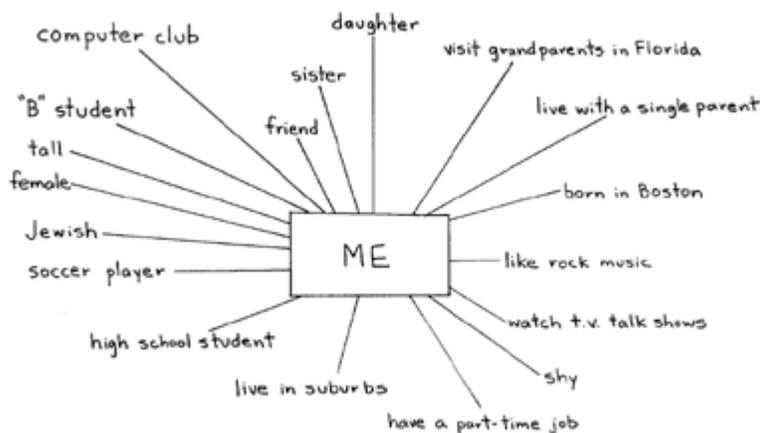
Then suddenly he got up and walked through the deep snow toward the cave. Inside it was cozy and snug. The icy wind and cold, cold snow couldn't reach him here. He felt warm all over.

He sank down on a bed of pine boughs and soon he was happily asleep and dreaming sweet dreams, just like all bears do, when they hibernate. So even though the FOREMAN and the GENERAL MANAGER and the THIRD VICE-PRESIDENT and the SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT and the FIRST VICE PRESIDENT and the ZOO BEARS and the CIRCUS BEARS had said, he was a silly man who needed a shave and wore a fur coat, I don't think he really believed it. Do you? No indeed, he knew he wasn't a silly man, and he wasn't a silly Bear either.<sup>2</sup>



## CONNECTIONS

“Who am I?” is a question that each of us asks at some time in our life. In answering, we define ourselves. The word *define* means “to separate one thing from all of the others.” What distinguishes the Bear from all other bears? From all other workers at the Factory? Create an identity chart for the Bear. The diagram below is an example of an identity chart. Individuals fill it in with the words they call themselves as well as the labels society gives them. What phrases does the Bear use to define himself? What words did others use to define him? Include both on the diagram.



Create an identity chart for yourself. Begin with the words or phrases that describe the way you see yourself. Add those words and phrases to your chart. Most people define themselves by using categories important to their culture. They include not only gender, age, and physical characteristics but also ties to a particular religion, class, neighborhood, school, and nation.

Compare your charts with those of your classmates. Which categories were included on every chart? Which appeared on only a few charts? As you look at other charts your perspective may change. You may wish to add new categories to the one you created. This activity allows you to see the world through multiple perspectives. What labels would others attach to you? Do they see you as a leader or a follower? A conformist or a rebel? Are you a peacemaker, a bully, or a bystander? How do society's labels influence the way you see yourself? The kinds of choices you and others make each day? For example, if a person is known as a bully, how likely is he or she to live up to that label?

Throughout this course, you will encounter words that you know but have difficulty explaining. Instead of relying only on a dictionary to define these words, develop your own working definitions. Doing so will help you can make those words an integral part of your vocabulary. The following is an example of a working definition that builds to encompass more and more information:

Bureaucracy:

- like a tree or an organization
- a structure that organizes the work of business or government

- the system set up in the factory described in *the bear that wasn't* (foreman – general manager – 3rd vice-president – and so on.)

→ indicates key videos, books, and other resources. The use of these materials is highly recommended.

You may want to include pictures in your working definition. Often they reveal more about a complex idea than a definition that relies only on words. Draw a picture of a bureaucracy and add it to your working definition. Then create a working definition for the word identity. A useful reference is *Visual Thinking* by Rudolf Arnheim (University of California Press, 1969). It suggests new ways of looking at ideas.

What does the title *the bear that wasn't* mean? Why didn't the Factory officials recognize the Bear for what he was? Why did it become harder and harder for him to maintain his identity as he moved through the bureaucracy of the Factory? What is Tashlin suggesting about the relationship between an individual and society? About the way a person's identity is defined? About the way powerful individuals and groups shape the identity of those with less power and authority?

How does our need to be a part of a group affect our actions? Why is it so difficult for a person to go against the group? Have you ever experienced a similar problem to that of the Bear? How did you deal with it? Were you able to maintain your independence? How difficult was it to do so?

→ The film, *After the First*, tells of a 12 year-old boy's first hunting trip and the way he and other members of his family responded to the event. It is available from the Facing History Resource Center. The film explores the way Steve and each of his parents viewed the trip. This film is the first of many included in the course. Each was chosen to prompt discussion of sophisticated and complex moral issues. As you watch this film and others like it, try not to take sides until you have looked at the issue from each character's perspective. The following questions can be used to guide class discussion or journal writing.

- What does the scene in the kitchen reveal about Steve's personality? His parents' values? How does the viewer know what Steve thinks?
- What is Steve's mood at the beginning of the film? At the end? At what point does his attitude begin to change?
- The relationship between Steve and his father is essential to the film. How is that relationship revealed in these scenes: in the truck on the way to the woods, when Steve learns to use a rifle, when he decides whether to shoot the rabbit, and when the film ends?
- What dilemma did Steve face? What options did he have? What values were associated with each option? How did Steve resolve his dilemma? What motivated his decision? What part did cultural values play in his decision? What other factors influenced it? How hard is it to go against the group? To stand up for the things you believe in?

- What does the word values mean? How do Steve’s values affect the way he views the world? The way he acts?
- *After the First* is a parable – a story that has a moral or teaches a lesson. To figure out the moral of the film, ask yourself what lesson Steve’s father wanted him to learn. What lesson did his mother want him to learn? How do you know her feelings? What did Steve actually learn? Then decide what the film taught you.
- What do people mean when they say, “Don’t be so quick to judge?” How does it apply to the film?
- Make an identity chart for Steve. What words or phrases would he use to describe himself? What words or phrases might his father add to the chart? What might his mother add?
- How does the father’s attitude toward hunting apply to violence on a larger scale? (To war, for example.) Are there forms of violence that are not physical?
- Most cultures have rites of passage – ceremonies that mark the beginning of a new stage in a person’s life. Many of those rites focus on the passage from childhood to adulthood. A hunting trip is a rite of passage in Steve’s family. What event, if any, seems to mark the end of childhood in your family? In your community? Is that rite of passage the same for boys as it is for girls? You may want to research and then compare rites of passage in several different cultures. What do they all have in common? What differences seem most striking? Is there a universal rite of passage?

Sigmund Freud once posed a fateful question for humankind: To what extent can culture overcome the violence caused by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction? Is there a human instinct of aggression? What insights does *After the First* provide?

## READING 2

### *“Little Boxes”*

Categories and labels can help us understand why we act the way we do. But sometimes those labels obscure what is really important about a person. Student Anthony Wright’s difficulties in filling in the “little boxes” on an application form explains why reducing individuals to a category can be misleading.

Little Boxes. “How would you describe yourself? (please check one)” Some aren’t as cordial. “Ethnic Group”: These little boxes and circles bring up an issue for me that threatens my identity. Who am I?

Unlike many others, I cannot answer that question easily when it comes to ethnicity. My mother is Hispanic (for those who consider South American as Hispanic) with an Asian father and my father is white with English and Irish roots. What does that make me? My identity already gets lost when my mother becomes a “Latino” instead of an “Ecuadorean.” The cultures of Puerto Rico and Argentina are distinct, even though they are both “Hispanic.” The same applies to White, Asian, Native American or Black, all vague terms trying to classify cultures that have sometimes greater disparities inside the classification than with other cultures. Yet I can’t even be classified by these excessively broad terms.

My classification problem doesn’t stop with my ethnicity. My father is a blue-collar worker, yet the technical work he does is much more than manual labor. My family, through our sweat, brains and savings, have managed to live comfortably. We no longer can really be classified as poor or lower class, but we really aren’t middle class. Also, in my childhood my parents became disillusioned with the Catholic religion and stopped going to church. They gave me the option of going or not, but I was lazy and opted to stay in bed late Sunday mornings. Right now I don’t even know if I am agnostic, atheist or something else, like transcendentalist. I just don’t fit into categories nicely.

My biggest conflict of identity comes from another source: education. In the seventh grade, I was placed in a prep school from P.S. 61. The only similarity between the two institutions is that they are both in the Bronx, yet one is a block away from Charlotte Street, a nationally known symbol of urban decay, while the other is in one of the wealthiest sections of New York City. Prep for Prep, a program for disadvantaged students that starts in the fifth grade, worked with me for fourteen months, bringing me up to the private-school level academically and preparing me socially, but still, the transition was rough. Even in my senior year, I felt like I really did not fit in with the prep school culture. Yet I am totally separated from my neighborhood. My home happens to be situated there, and I might go to the corner bodega for milk and bananas, or walk to the subway station, but that is the extent of my contact with my neighborhood. I regret this, but when more than half the teenagers are high-school dropouts, and drugs are becoming a major industry there, there is no place for me. Prep for Prep was where I would “hang out” if not at my high school, and it took the place of my neighborhood and has been a valuable cushion. At high school, I was separate from the mainstream majority, but still an inextricable part of it, so I worked there and put my effort into making it a better place.

For a while, I desperately wanted to fit into a category in order to be accepted. Everywhere I went I felt out of place. When I go into the neighborhood restaurant to ask for *arroz y pollo*, my awkward Spanish

and gringo accent makes the lady at the counter go in the back for someone who knows English, even though I think I know enough Spanish to survive a conversation. When I was little, and had short straight black hair, I appeared to be one of the few Asians in my school, and was tagged with the stereotype. I went to Ecuador to visit relatives, and they could not agree about whether I was Latin or gringo. When the little boxes appeared on the Achievements, I marked Hispanic even though I had doubts on the subject. At first sight, I can pass as white, and my last name will assure that I will not be persecuted as someone who is dark and has “Rodriguez” as his last name. I chose Hispanic because I most identified with it, because of my Puerto Rican neighborhood that I grew up in, and my mother, who has a big influence on me. However, many people would not consider me a Latino. And by putting just “Hispanic,” “White,” or “Asian,” I felt as if I was neglecting a very essential side of me, and lying in the process. I now put “Other” in those little boxes, and when possible indicate exactly what I am.

I realize now the problem is not with me but with the identification system. The words *Black*, *White*, *Hispanic*, *Asian*, and *Native American*, describe more than one would expect. They describe genealogy, appearance and culture, all very distinct things, which most people associate as one; but there exists many exceptions, like the person who grows up in the Black inner city and adopts that culture, but is white by birth; or the Puerto Rican immigrant with blue eyes and blond hair. Religion can also obscure definitions, as is the case in Israel recently with the label “Jewish,” which can be a race, culture or religion, and the definition of being Jewish by birth. The classifications especially get confused when appearance affects the culture, as with non-White cultures due to discrimination. Defining what is “culture;” and the specifics also confuses the issue. For example, it can be argued that almost every American, regardless of race (genealogy), is at least to some degree of the white culture, the “norm” in this country. With more culturally and racially mixed people like myself entering society, these classifications have to be addressed and defined.

My mixture helps me look to issues and ideas from more than one viewpoint, and I like that. Racial, economic, social and religious topics can be looked upon with a special type of objectivity that I feel is unique. I am not objective. I am subjective with more than one bias, so I can see both sides of an argument between a black militant and white conservative, a tenant and a landlord or a Protestant and a Catholic. I will usually side with the underdog, but it is necessary to understand opposing viewpoints in order to take a position. This diversity of self that I have, I enjoy, despite the confusion caused by a society so complex that sweeping generalizations are made. I cannot and don't deserve to be generalized or classified, just like anybody else. My background and position have affected me, but I dislike trying to be

treated from that information. I am Anthony E. Wright, and the rest of the information about me should come from what I write, what I say and how I act. Nothing else.<sup>3</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Construct an identity chart for Anthony Wright. How does it help explain why he called his essay “Little Boxes”? Why does he find it so difficult to classify himself? When does a special designation become a box that limits a person?

Psychologist Deborah Tannen writes, “We all know we are unique individuals, but we tend to see others as representatives of groups. It’s a natural tendency, since we must see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn’t be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn’t predict a lot about them and feel that we know who and what they are. But this natural and useful ability to see patterns of similarity has unfortunate consequences. It is offensive to reduce an individual to a category, and it is also misleading.”<sup>4</sup>

Give examples of the ways that generalizing can be useful. Give examples of its “unfortunate consequences.” How does Wright’s essay support Tannen’s observation?

What is Wright’s dilemma? Do you or people you know share that dilemma? If so, how do you or they resolve it? Does the reverse of Wright’s dilemma ever cause problems? That is, do people ever feel hurt because their membership in a group is not acknowledged?

How do Tannen’s comments help explain why Wright concludes that “I cannot and don’t deserve to be generalized or classified, just like anybody else”? Do you share his feelings?

## READING 3

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### *“Race” and Science*

**R**ace is one of the categories people use to identify themselves and others. In biology, race refers to those who share a genetic heritage. Most biologists today believe that it is a meaningless concept. As one scientist noted, “Human ‘racial’ differentiation is, indeed, only skin deep. Any use of racial categories must take its justification from some other source than biology. The remarkable feature of human evolution and history has been the very small degree of divergence between geographical populations as compared

What things objectively *are* is often less significant to human beings than what things *mean* in cultural frameworks of beliefs, values, and attitudes.

with the genetic variation among individuals.”<sup>5</sup> Yet these findings have had little effect on popular opinion. Sociologist Allan G. Johnson offers an example to describe the importance individuals and groups in American society have placed on the concept of “race.”

Imagine that you apply for a copy of your birth certificate one day, and when you receive it, you discover that it lists your “race” as something other than what you and everyone else always considered it to be. You are black, and the certificate says you are white; or you are white, and it says you are black. How would you feel?

This is exactly what happened in 1977 to Susie Guillory Phipps – a New Orleans resident who had always been white, both to herself and to everyone who encountered her. She had twice married white men, and her family album was filled with pictures of blue-eyed, white ancestors. The state of Louisiana, however, defined her as “colored.”

When she protested to state authorities, they carefully traced her ancestry back 222 years, and found that although her great-great-great grandfather was white, her great-great-great grandmother was black. Under Louisiana law, anyone whose ancestry was at least 3 percent black was considered black. Thus, even with an ancestry 97 percent white, the state defined her as black.

Susie Phipps spent \$20,000 to force Louisiana to change her birth certificate, and in 1983 Louisiana repealed the law. Why did she go to such expense? Beyond the obvious shock to her identity, there are larger issues. Why does the state have a formula for officially deciding what each person’s race is? Why would a tiny percentage of black ancestry cause her to be considered black, while an overwhelmingly white ancestry would not mean she is white?

The key lies in the word “mean” in the previous sentence, for... what things objectively are is often less significant to human beings than what things mean in cultural frameworks of beliefs, values, and attitudes.<sup>6</sup>

Susie Phipps’ dilemma has nothing to do with biology and everything to do with the way her society uses the term *race*. Until the mid-1800s the word had a number of meanings. Sometimes it referred to a whole species – as in “the human race.” Sometimes it meant a nation or tribe – as in “the Japanese race or the French race.” And sometimes it referred to a family – “the last of his or her race.” These usages all imply ties of kinship and suggest that shared characteristics are somehow passed from one generation to the next. These usages also lack precision. So did the way biologists used the term in the mid-1800s.

Nineteenth-century scientists defined *race* as “kind,” an identifiably different form of an organism within a species. But as knowledge of genetics expanded, that definition became less and less useful. As a result, one writer wondered why we “have no difficulty at all in telling individuals

apart in our own group, but ‘they’ all look alike.” He went on to ask, “[If] we could look at a random sample of different genes, not biased by our socialization, how much difference would there be between major geographical groups, say between Africans and Australian aborigines, as opposed to the differences between individuals within these groups?”<sup>7</sup> To answer that question, a number of scientists have studied genetic variations both within a population and among different populations. Their findings?

Of all human genetic variation known for enzymes and other proteins, where it has been possible to actually count up the frequencies of different forms of the genes and so get an objective estimate of genetic variation, 85 percent turns out to be between individuals within the same local population, tribe, or nation; a further 8 percent between tribes or nations within a major “race” and the remaining 7 percent is between major “races.” That means that the genetic variation between one Spaniard and another, or between one Masai and another, is 85 percent of all human genetic variation, while only 15 percent is accounted for by breaking people into groups.<sup>8</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Like the Bear in *the bear that wasn't*, Susie Phipps was told that she wasn't who she thought she was. Who told her that? How important is that opinion? What does Johnson mean when he says “what things objectively are is often less significant to human beings than what things mean in cultural frameworks of beliefs, attitudes, and values”? As you continue reading, look for other examples that support that point of view. Look, too, for evidence that calls it into question.

Anthony Appiah, a professor who teaches Afro-American Studies, points out that even though scientists have proven that the concept of race is invalid, it persists in not only popular culture but also such academic disciplines as history and literature. He maintains, however, that the idea of a collective identity is not inherently wrong. He sees a problem only when we begin to assign moral or social rankings to those collective identities. Then, he argues, we must rethink why we divide ourselves into races. How do you explain the continuing acceptance of a meaningless idea? What kind of power do ideas – even mistaken ideas – have to shape the way we see ourselves and others?

Many students use their journals to record their answers to questions raised in Connections. Some keep a “double-entry” journal in which they write responses to key questions on the left side of the page, leaving room on the right for later observations. In this way, they conduct a conversation with themselves.

Why do you think we have no difficulty in telling individuals apart in our own group, but *they* all look alike – even though there are more genetic variations among *us* than there are between *us* and *them*?

Create a working definition of *race*. Begin with what the word means to you. Then add the meanings explored in this reading. Write a working

definition of *racism*. Keep in mind that the ending *ism* refers to a doctrine or principle. You will want to expand both definitions as you complete this chapter and those that follow.

## READING 4

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### *Stereotyping*

Some sociologists study the effects of the idea of “race” on human behavior. They also explore the impact of ethnicity. An ethnic group is a distinctive group of people within a country. Members share a cultural heritage. Ethnicity can be the basis for feelings of pride and solidarity. But, like race, it can also be the basis for prejudice and discrimination.

The word *prejudice* comes from the word *pre-judge*. We pre-judge when we have an opinion about a person because of a group to which that individual belongs. A prejudice has the following characteristics.

1. It is based on real or imagined differences between groups.
2. It attaches values to those differences in ways that benefit the dominant group at the expense of minorities.
3. It is generalized to all members of a target group.

Discrimination occurs when prejudices are translated into action. For example, a person who says that all Mexicans are lazy is guilty of prejudice, but one who refuses to hire a Mexican is guilty of discrimination. Not all prejudices result in discrimination. Some are positive. But, whether positive or negative, prejudices have a similar effect - they reduce individuals to categories or stereotypes. A stereotype is a judgment about an individual based on the real or imagined characteristics of a group. Joseph H. Suina, a professor of education and a member of the Cochiti Pueblo, recalls the effects stereotyping had on his behavior in the Marines.

From the moment my comrades in the military discovered I was an Indian, I was treated differently. My name disappeared. I was no longer Suina, Joseph, or Joe. Suddenly, I was Chief, Indian, or Tonto. Occasionally, I was referred to as Geronimo, Crazy Horse or some other well-known warrior from the past. It was almost always with an affection that develops in a family, but clearly, I was seen in the light of stereotypes that my fellow Marines from around the country had about Native Americans.

Natives were few in the Marine Corps. Occasionally, I'd run across one from another battalion. Sure enough, just like me, each of them was “Chief” or “Indian.” Machismo is very important in the Corps and names such as Chief and Crazy Horse were affirmations of very

desirable qualities for those entering combat situations. Good warriors, good fighting men, we were to be skilled in reading the land, notable for our physical prowess, renowned for our bravery. In addition, we were to drink to the point of total inebriation or to be in the midst of a barroom brawl before the night was over. Never permitted to assume leadership, but always in the role of supportive and faithful companion, just like the Lone Ranger's Tonto.

Personally, I was anything but combatant, and my experiences with alcohol had been limited to two or three beers prior to my enlistment. Never in my wildest dreams had I imagined that I would be accorded the characteristics of a noble and reckless warrior. Since these traits were held in such high esteem, I enjoyed the status and acceptance they afforded me among the men. My own platoon commander singled me out to compete in a rope-climbing event at a regimental field meet. After I easily won that contest (my Pueblo life had included a great deal of wood chopping), my stature as chief increased.

I actually began to believe that I had those qualities and started behaving in accord with the stereotypes. Later during my two tours of duty in Vietnam, I played out my expected role quite well. I went on twice as many search and destroy missions as others; I took "the point" more often than anyone else. After all, couldn't I hear, see, smell, and react to signs of the enemy better than any of my comrades? On shore leave, I learned to drink with the best of them and always managed to find trouble.

Almost a full year beyond my four years of enlistment, I was recovered from my second set of wounds and finally discharged. I had earned two purple hearts, a bronze star, the Gallantry Cross (Vietnam's highest military award), and numerous other combat expedition medals. I also had, on my record, time in jails in Japan, the Philippines, and Mexico.<sup>9</sup>

Over twenty years later, Jeanne Park, a student at Stuyvesant High School in New York City, had a similar experience with stereotypes.

Who am I?

For Asian-American students, the answer is a diligent, hardworking and intelligent young person. But living up to this reputation has secretly haunted me.

The labeling starts in elementary school. It's not uncommon for a teacher to remark, "You're Asian, you're supposed to do well in math." The underlying message is, "You're Asian and you're supposed to be smarter."

Not to say being labeled intelligent isn't flattering, because it is, or not to deny that basking in the limelight of being top of my class isn't ego-boosting, because frankly it is. But at a certain point, the pressure became crushing. I felt as if doing poorly on my next spelling quiz would stain the exalted reputation of all Asian students forever.

So I continued to be an academic overachiever, as were my friends. By junior high school I started to believe I was indeed smarter. I became condescending toward non-Asians. I was a bigot; all my friends were Asians. The thought of intermingling occurred rarely if ever.

My elitist opinion of Asian students changed, however, in high school. As a student at what is considered one of the nation's most competitive science and math schools, I found that being on top is no longer an easy feat.

I quickly learned that Asian students were not smarter. How could I ever have believed such a thing? All around me are intelligent, ambitious people who are not only Asian but white, black and Hispanic.

Superiority complexes aside, the problem of social segregation still exists in the schools. With few exceptions, each race socializes only with its "own kind."

Students see one another in the classroom, but outside the classroom there remains distinct segregation.

Racist lingo abounds. An Asian student who socializes only with other Asians is believed to be an Asian Supremacist or, at the very least, arrogant and closed off. Yet an Asian student who socializes only with whites is called a "twinkie," one who is yellow on the outside but white on the inside.

A white teenager who socializes only with whites is thought of as prejudiced, yet one who socializes with Asians is considered an "egg," white on the outside and yellow on the inside.

These culinary classifications go on endlessly, needless to say, leaving many confused, and leaving many more fearful than ever of social experimentation. Because the stereotypes are accepted almost unanimously, they are rarely challenged. Many develop harmful stereotypes of entire races. We label people before we even know them.

Labels learned at a young age later metamorphose into more visible acts of racism. For example, my parents once accused and ultimately fired a Puerto Rican cashier, believing she had stolen \$200 from the register at their grocery store. They later learned it was a mistake. An Asian shopkeeper nearby once beat a young Hispanic youth who worked there with a baseball bat because he believed the boy to be lazy and dishonest.

We all hold misleading stereotypes of people that limit us as individuals in that we cheat ourselves out of the benefits different cultures can contribute. We can grow and learn from each culture whether it be Chinese, Korean or African-American.

Just recently some Asian boys in my neighborhood were attacked by a group of young white boys who have christened themselves the Master Race. Rather than being angered by this act, I feel pity for this generation that lives in a state of bigotry.

It may be too late for our parents' generation to accept that each person can only be judged for the characteristics that set him or her apart as an individual. We, however, can do better.<sup>10</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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In 1993, the *Los Angeles Times* printed an interview with a group of teenagers on their use of stereotypes. A high-school freshman told the reporter, "I don't mean to stereotype but sometimes I judge people by first impressions. Once, I stereotyped a white girl because I thought she was acting black to make friends. Once I got to know her, I learned she was a sweet person and that she acted the way she did because she had grown up around blacks. That changed my mind." How is a stereotype like a first impression? How is it different? How do stereotypes affect relationships at your school? At home? On the street? How do they affect the way you see yourself? The way you view others?

What did Suina learn from his experiences with stereotyping? What did Jeanne Park learn? How did their experiences shape their identity?

This reading describes three characteristics of prejudice. Which characteristic or characteristics are reflected in Suina's experiences as a Marine? In Park's experiences? In your own experiences?

Excerpts from *House on Mango Street* cannot be published online. The quotation is available in the printed version.

Write a working definition of the following terms: *ethnic group, prejudice, discrimination, stereotype*. You will want to add to those definitions throughout the course.

→ In *The Survival of Sontheary Sou*, a Cambodian immigrant describes the difficulties she faced as a result of the assumptions people made about her. The video is available from the Facing History Resource Center, as is a bibliography of multicultural literature.

→The video, *Eye of the Storm* documents a unique lesson taught by a third-grade teacher in a small Iowa town. Jane Elliott divided her students into two groups based on the color of their eyes. The film details what happened next. *A Class Divided*, an expanded version of *Eye of the Storm*, includes a meeting Elliott had with her former students in 1985 to discuss how the experiment affected their lives. It also shows the outcome of a similar experiment, this time with adults at a correctional facility. Both videos are available from the Facing History Resource Center. As you watch either film, think about the lesson the experiment teaches. What does it suggest about the meanings we assign to differences? About the way stereotypes shape our view of ourselves and others?

## READING 5

### *Legacies*

**M**aya Angelou is an artist whose life defies labels. She is a novelist, poet, actor, composer, director, and civil rights activist. She is also a woman with a strong sense of identity. In an interview, she spoke of the people who helped her make the most of her unique talents and skills. She particularly recalled her uncle Willie.

I was sent to him when I was three from California and he and my grandmother owned the only black-owned store in the town. He was obliged to work in the store, but he was severely crippled. So he needed me to help, and my brother. So at about four he started us to learn to read and write and do our times tables. In order to get me to do my times tables, he would take me behind my neck - my clothes - and stand me in front of a pot-bellied stove. And he would say, "Now, sister, do your sixes." I did my sixes. I did my sevens. Even now, after an evening of copious libation, I can be awakened at eleven o'clock at night and asked, "Will you do your elevenses?" I do my elevenses with alacrity.

A few years ago my uncle died, and I went to Little Rock and was met by Miss Daisy Bates. And she told me, "Girl, there's somebody who wants to meet you." And I said that I'd be glad to meet whoever. She said, "Good looking man." And I said, "Indeed, yes, certainly." So that evening she brought a man over to the hotel. He said, "I don't want to shake your hand. I want to hug you." And I agreed. He said, "You know, Willie has died in Stamps [Arkansas]." Now Stamps is very near to Texas. And Little Rock, when I was growing up, was as exotic as Cairo, Egypt, Buda and Pest. This man knew where Stamps was, and my crippled uncle?

I think that the courage to confront evil and turn it by dint of will into something applicable in the development of our evolution, individually and collectively is exciting, honorable.

He said, “Because of your uncle Willie I am who I am today.” He said, “In the ‘20s, I was the only child of a blind mother. Your uncle gave me a job in your store, made me love to learn, and taught me my times tables.” I asked him how did he do that and he said, “He used to grab me [by the neck].” He said, “I guess you want to know who I am today.”

“Yes, sir.”

He said, “I’m Bussick, vice-mayor of Little Rock, Arkansas.” He went on to become the first black mayor of Little Rock, Arkansas.

He said, “When you get down to Stamps, look up” and he gave me the name of a lawyer. He said, “He’s a good old boy. He will look after you properly.” I went down expecting a middle-aged black man, and a young white man leapt to his feet. He said, “Miss Angelou, I am just delighted to meet you. Why you don’t understand. Mr. Bussick called me today. Mr. Bussick is the most powerful black man in the state of Arkansas, but more important than that, he’s a noble man. Because of Mr. Bussick, I am who I am today.” I said, “Let me sit down first.”

He said, “I was an only child of a blind mother, and when I was eleven years old, Mr. Bussick got hold of me and made me love to learn. And I’m now in the State Legislature.”

That which lives after us. I look back at Uncle Willie: crippled, black, poor, unexposed to the worlds of great ideas, who left for our generation and generations to come a legacy so rich...

We need the courage to create ourselves daily. To be bodacious enough to create ourselves daily. As Christians, as Jews, as Muslims, as thinking, caring, laughing, loving human beings. I think that the courage to confront evil and turn it by dint of will into something applicable to the development of our evolution, individually and collectively is exciting, honorable.<sup>11</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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What is a *legacy*? What legacy did Uncle Willie leave? How did it affect Maya Angelou? The first black mayor of Little Rock? The young white lawyer Uncle Willie never met? Has anyone in your life left a similar legacy? If so, what difference has that legacy made in your life? In the lives of others in your community?

What does Angelou mean when she says, “I think that the courage to confront evil and turn it by dint of will into something applicable in the development of our evolution, individually and collectively is exciting, honorable”? What does the statement suggest about the way she defines *courage*? The ways she defines *creativity*?

→The interview with Maya Angelou is included on a video entitled *Facing Evil with Bill Moyers*. It is available from the Facing History Resource

Center. Moyers also interviewed Angelou for a television series on creativity. It, too, can be ordered from the Resource Center. At one point in the program, Moyers reminds his audience of all the people who have made a difference in Angelou's life. "They signified her worth. They said, 'You matter,' they turned her suffering rage upward and brought the poet to life. It is not a scientifically certifiable fact that each child born into the world comes with the potential to create. It is rather a statement of faith. But I can't imagine any declaration more important for our society to make. Where our heart is, so too perhaps our treasure." What is Moyers saying about the relationship between an individual and society? About their mutual responsibilities?

Among the people who made a difference in Angelou's life was a neighbor that young Maya knew as "Mrs. Flowers." She helped the child regain the voice she lost as a result of a trauma. Who are the people who have helped you find your voice? How is one's voice related to his or her self-esteem?

If you were to interview Maya Angelou, what questions would you like to ask about her uncle and his legacy? What experiences would you share with her? Record both in your journal. You may want to read her books and poems to see if you can find answers to your questions.

## READING 6

### *Finding One's Voice*

In a series of television programs that explore creativity, Bill Moyers states that "in classrooms and in schools everywhere, the urge to create is lying in each [child] like a seed in the spring soil." In how many, he wonders, will the ground "never be touched by the season's warmth." He goes on to say, "I think it is true, as wiser men than I have noted, that the suppression of this life within us lies at the base of so much of today's waste, violence and mindless cruelty, for the artist, the craftsman, is not necessarily the more gifted among us but the more fortunate."<sup>12</sup>

Julius Lester, a noted author and college professor, has also reflected on the way violence and humiliation affected his own life.

Who we are by the sociological and political definitions of society has little to do with who we are.

I grew up in the forties and fifties in Kansas City, Kansas, and Nashville, Tennessee, with summers spent in Arkansas. The forties and fifties were not pleasant times for blacks and I am offended by white people who get nostalgic for the fifties. I have no nostalgia for segregation, for the "No Colored Allowed" signs covering the landscape like litter on the smooth, green grass of a park, I have no nostalgia for a time when I endangered my life if, while downtown

shopping with my parents, I raised my eyes and accidentally met the eyes of a white woman. Black men and boys were lynched for this during my childhood and adolescence.<sup>13</sup>

Lester describes the way he survived those years.

I grew up in a violent world. Segregation was a deathly spiritual violence, not only in its many restrictions on where we could live, eat, go to school, and go after dark. There was also the constant threat of physical death if you looked at a white man in what he considered the wrong way or if he didn't like your attitude. There was also the physical violence of my community... What I have realized is that on those nights I lay in bed reading westerns and detective novels, I was attempting to neutralize and withstand the violence that was so much a part of my dailiness. In westerns and mysteries I found a kind of mirror in which one element of my world – violence – was isolated and made less harmful to me.”

Not surprisingly, Lester found his voice in a book.

One of the pivotal experiences of my life came when I was eighteen. I wandered into a bookstore in downtown Nashville one frosted, gray day in late autumn aware that I was looking for something: I was looking for myself, and I generally find myself while wandering through a bookstore, looking at books until I find the one that is calling me. On this particular day I wandered for quite a while until I picked up a paperback with the word *Haiku* on the cover. What is that? I wondered. I opened the book and read,

On a withered branch  
a crow has settled –  
autumn nightfall.

I trembled and turned the pages hastily until my eyes stopped on these words:

A giant firefly;  
that way, this way, that way, this –  
and it passes by.

I read more of the brief poems, these voices from seventeenth-century Japan, and I knew: This is my voice. This simplicity, this directness, this way of using words to direct the soul to silence and beyond. This is my voice! I exulted inside. Then I stopped. How could I, a little colored kid from Nashville, Tennessee – and that is all I knew myself to be in those days like perpetual death knells – how could I be feeling that something written in seventeenth-century Japan could be my voice?

I almost put the book back, but that inner prompting which had led me to it would not allow such an act of self-betrayal. I bought the book

and began writing haiku, and the study of haiku led to the study of Zen Buddhism, which led to the study of flower arranging, and I suspect I am still following the path that opened to me on that day when I was eighteen, though I no longer write haiku.

I eventually understood that it made perfect sense for a little colored kid from Nashville, Tennessee, to recognize his voice in seventeenth-century Japanese poetry. Who we are by the sociological and political definitions of society has little to do with who we are.

In the quiet and stillness that surrounds us when we read a book, we are known to ourselves in ways we are not when we are with people. We enter a relationship of intimacy with the writer, and if the writer has written truly and if we give ourselves over to what is written, we are given the gift of ourselves in ways that surprise and catch the soul off guard.<sup>14</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Lester says, “Who we are by the sociological and political definitions of society has little to do with who we are.” Review your identity chart (Reading 1). Does your chart support his view?

Why does Lester describe segregation as a “deathly spiritual violence”? Some people believe that violence is only physical. Can words be violent? Can they cause violence?

What does Lester mean when he says he found his “voice in seventeenth-century Japanese poetry”? What kind of voice is it? Is it his conscience telling him the right thing to do or a voice that defines who he is? What is the connection between one’s voice and his or her identity? What part does one’s voice play in shaping an identity?

What lessons did Lester learn from the society in which he grew up? What barriers did society place in the way of his becoming the kind of person he wanted to be? How did he overcome those barriers?

To what degree are we bound by our culture? By the way we were socialized? The way we were educated?

What book has had an impact on you? What film?

Like Lester, Jimmy Santiago Baca is a writer who has experienced prejudice and discrimination. He is a Chicano who has lived amid violence for much of his life. But unlike Lester, he spent little time reading or writing until he went to prison. There he began to do both. When an interviewer asked what prompted him to change, Baca replied, “If I hadn’t written in prison, I would still be in prison... I had to go back to my tablet and write in order to find a deeper understanding than the immediate satisfaction or gratification.” He went on to say, “The only way to learn is to write and write until

you are able to come really close to the way you see life.” The word *see* has special meaning for Baca.

The way the Indians say “seeing” is how close you can come to the way things really are, the way a deer sees a rock, or the way a frog sees water; we call that “seeing.” Every human being has that seeing in them, and someone who gets up and writes every day, all he or she is trying to do is to get close to his or her seeing capabilities; that’s where the good poems come, when you are able to see. No class is going to teach you that. Luci Tapahonso is a good example. Her poetry could not have been written by anyone but her. She sees things and she has to use her Navajo culture and this other culture and the English language. She has to put them together in such a way that is Luci Tapahonso and only her. She can read all the books she likes to, but nothing is going to teach her her own voice.<sup>15</sup>

How is Baca’s use of the word *see* similar to what Julius Lester calls *voice*? How is *seeing*, in Baca’s sense of the word, like *empathy* – the ability to walk in someone else’s shoes? Are you able to “see” in Baca’s sense of the word? If so, describe the experience. How did it make you feel? Did it take courage?

James F. Gilligan, a professor of psychiatry and the clinical director of a prison mental health service, states, “I have yet to see a serious act of violence that was not provoked by the experience of feeling shamed and humiliated, disrespected and ridiculed, and that did not represent the attempt to prevent or undo this ‘loss of face’ – no matter how severe the punishment, even if it includes death.”<sup>16</sup> How do his comments relate to Lester’s description of segregation? Look for other examples as you read. What do they suggest about the relationship between respect and self-esteem?

## READING 7

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### *Fear*

Not everyone is able to find his or her voice. In a short story entitled “Fear,” Gary Soto writes about a boy who had to deal with shame.

A cold day after school. Frankie T., who would drown his brother by accident that coming spring and would use a length of pipe to beat a woman in a burglary years later, had me pinned on the ground behind a backstop, his breath sour as meat left out in the sun. “*Cabron*,” he called me and I didn’t say anything. I stared at his face, shaped like the sole of a shoe, and just went along with the insults, although now and

then I tried to raise a shoulder in a halfhearted struggle because that was part of the game.

He let his drool yo-yo from his lips, missing my feet by only inches, after which he giggled and called me names. Finally he let me up. I slapped grass from my jacket and pants, and pulled my shirt tail from my pants to shake out the fistful of dirt he had stuffed in my collar. I stood by him, nervous and red-faced from struggling, and when he suggested that we climb the monkey bars together, I followed him quietly to the kid's section of Jefferson Elementary. He climbed first, with small grunts, and for a second I thought of running but knew he would probably catch me – if not then, the next day. There was no way out of being a fifth grader – the daily event of running to teachers to show them your bloody nose. It was just a fact, like having lunch.

So I climbed the bars and tried to make conversation, first about the girls in our classroom and then about kickball. He looked at me smiling as if I had a camera in my hand, his teeth green like the underside of a rock, before he relaxed his grin into a simple gray line across his face. He told me to shut up. He gave me a hard stare and I looked away to a woman teacher walking to her car and wanted very badly to yell for help. She unlocked her door, got in, played with her face in the visor mirror while the engine warmed, and then drove off with the blue smoke trailing. Frankie was watching me all along and when I turned to him, he laughed, "*Chale!* She can't help you, *ese.*" He moved closer to me on the bars and I thought he was going to hit me; instead he put his arm around my shoulder, squeezing firmly in friendship. "C'mon, chicken, let's be cool."

I opened my mouth and tried to feel happy as he told me what he was going to have for Thanksgiving. "My Mamma's got a turkey and ham, lots of potatoes, yams, and stuff like that. I saw it in the refrigerator. And she says we gonna get some pies. Really, *ese.*"

Poor liar, I thought, smiling as we clunked our heads softly like good friends. He had seen the same afternoon program on TV as I had, one in which a woman in an apron demonstrated how to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner. I knew he would have tortillas and beans, a round steak, maybe, and oranges from his backyard. He went on describing his Thanksgiving, then changed over to Christmas – the new bicycle, the clothes, the G.I. Joes. I told him that it sounded swell, even though I knew he was making it all up. His mother would in fact stand in line at the Salvation Army to come away hugging armfuls of toys that had been tapped back into shape by reformed alcoholics with veined noses. I pretended to be excited and asked if I could come over to his place to play after Christmas. "Oh, yeah, anytime," he said, squeezing my shoulder and clunking his head against mine.

When he asked what I was having for Thanksgiving, I told him that we would probably have a ham with pineapple on the top. My family was slightly better off than Frankie's, though I sometimes walked

around with cardboard in my shoes and socks with holes big enough to be ski masks, so holidays were extravagant happenings. I told him about the candied yams, the frozen green beans, and the pumpkin pie.

His eyes moved across my face as if he were deciding where to hit me – nose, temple, chin, talking mouth – and then he lifted his arm from my shoulder and jumped from the monkey bars, grunting as he landed. He wiped sand from his knees while looking up and warned me not to mess around with him any more. He stared with such a great meanness that I had to look away. He warned me again and then walked away. Incredibly relieved, I jumped from the bars and ran looking over my shoulder until I turned onto my street.

Frankie scared most of the school out of its wits and even had girls scampering out of view when he showed himself on the playground. If he caught us without notice, we grew quiet and stared down at our shoes until he passed after a threat or two. If he pushed us down, we stayed on the ground with our eyes closed and pretended we were badly hurt. If he riffled through our lunch bags, we didn't say anything. He took what he wanted, after which we sighed and watched him walk away after peeling an orange or chewing big chunks of an apple.

Still, that afternoon when he called Mr. Koligian, our teacher, a foul name – we grew scared for him. Mr. Koligian pulled and tugged at his body until it was in his arms and then out of his arms as he hurled Frankie against the building. Some of us looked away because it was unfair. We knew the house he lived in: The empty refrigerator, the father gone, the mother in a sad bathrobe, the beatings, the yearnings for something to love. When a teacher manhandled him, we all wanted to run away, but instead we stared and felt shamed. Robert, Adele, Yolanda shamed; Danny, Alfonso, Brenda shamed; Nash, Margie, Rocha shamed. We all watched him flop about as Mr. Koligian shook and grew red from anger. We knew his house and, for some, it was the same one to walk home to: The broken mother, the indifferent walls, the refrigerator's glare which fed the people no one wanted.<sup>17</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Some psychologists believe that bullies victimize others because they have been victimized. Does Soto's short story support that theory?

If bullies and their victims are linked, is it fear that connects them? Is it shame? Or is it anger? Gary Soto calls his story "Fear." Why do you think he chose that title?

When Professor James Gilligan asked prisoners why they committed a particular assault, he was frequently told that it was "because he disrespected me" or "he disrespected my visit" (meaning "visitor"). He goes on to say, "In fact, the word 'disrespect' is so central in the vocabulary, and therefore in the moral value system and the psychodynamics, of these chronically

violent people, that they have abbreviated it into the slang term, ‘he dis’ed me.’”<sup>18</sup> How do his comments apply to Frankie? What title do you think Gilligan would choose for this story?

Gary Soto’s short stories are based on his memories of his youth in a primarily Mexican American community. To what extent are his experiences unique? To what extent are they universal? How does this story support Julius Lester’s belief that “who we are by the sociological and political definitions of society has little to do with who we are”? (Reading 6)

A student named Jonah Kadish reflects on the links between victims and victimizers:

When I was younger, my best friend and I knew this other kid who wanted to be with us and have us like him. We pushed him around a lot and sometimes beat him up, we teased him and even went so far as to call him the Evil Alien in stories we wrote and read in front of the whole class. He did absolutely nothing back at us and that made us feel even stronger and as though we could keep on doing it, until he said stop. Even though the teachers and our parents tried to get us to stop, we felt justified in continuing, until he stood up for himself, which he never, ever did.

The funny thing was that when I was alone with him, walking from school, I would say “Sorry” and he’d just shrug his shoulders. I would think then that he was actually stronger and more mature than we were, and I still think that, because then he would still talk to me after the day was over and seemed to like me. But the next day, I would join in with my friend again, teasing him and trying not to lose my place as one of the strongest boys in the class.

This still bothers me, that I was so mean to him. I really feel guilty now when I am mean to someone. But this taught me some hard lessons helping me to understand that the physically strong are not always the strongest; what you see on the outside is not the whole truth about a person. Just looking at the outside not the inside makes a person prejudiced and prejudice in turn is a form of hate.<sup>19</sup>

In reflecting on his behavior, Kadish calls it a “funny thing” that he is sorry for teasing and pushing “the other kid” and yet continued to do so. How do you explain his behavior?

Kadish asks if there is a connection between power and hatred. How do you think Gary Soto would respond to that question? How would you answer it? You may record your responses in your journal so that you can refer to them later in the course.

Kadish doesn’t want to lose his place “as one of the strongest boys in the class.” Yet he believes the “other kid” is stronger than he is. What does he mean? Do you agree with his assessment?

The students in Frankie’s class feared him . Yet they felt only shame when their teacher attacked him. How do you account for their response? How might you have felt?

How did his classmates see Frankie? How did their teacher see him? Which came closest to what Jimmy Baca meant when he called seeing “to the way things really are”?

→Is it true that “sticks and stones can break my bones but names can never hurt me?” In the film *Names Can Really Hurt Us*, New York City teens talk about their experiences as victims of bigotry. Within the safety of the group, they share their anger at being victimized and their guilt for the times they hurt others with thoughtless or cruel remarks. The video can be ordered from the Facing History Resource Center. Also available is a similar video featuring a group of students in Chicago. That video is entitled *Facing History and Ourselves: Chicago Students Confront Hatred and Discrimination*.

→Kadish appears on a videotape entitled *A Discussion with Elie Wiesel: Facing History Students Confront Hatred and Violence*. The tape and a study guide are available from the Facing History Resource Center.

## READING 8

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### *The “In” Group*

**E**ve Shalen, a high-school student, reflected on her need to belong.

My eighth grade consisted of 28 students most of whom knew each other from the age of five or six. The class was close-knit and we knew each other so well that most of us could distinguish each other’s handwriting at a glance. Although we grew up together, we still had class outcasts. From second grade on, a small elite group spent a large portion of their time harassing two or three of the others. I was one of those two or three, though I don’t know why. In most cases when children get picked on, they aren’t good at sports or they read too much or they wear the wrong clothes or they are of a different race. But in my class, we all read too much and didn’t know how to play sports. We had also been brought up to carefully respect each other’s races. This is what was so strange about my situation. Usually, people are made outcasts because they are in some way different from the larger group. But in my class, large differences did not exist. It was as if the outcasts were invented by the group out of a need for them. Differences between us did not cause hatred; hatred caused differences between us.

Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last. Too often our actions are determined by the moment.

The harassment was subtle. It came in the form of muffled giggles when I talked, and rolled eyes when I turned around. If I was out in the playground and approached a group of people, they often fell silent. Sometimes someone would not see me coming and I would catch the tail end of a joke at my expense.

I also have a memory of a different kind. There was another girl in our class who was perhaps even more rejected than I. She also tried harder than I did for acceptance, providing the group with ample material for jokes. One day during lunch I was sitting outside watching a basketball game. One of the popular girls in the class came up to me to show me something she said I wouldn't want to miss. We walked to a corner of the playground where a group of three or four sat. One of them read aloud from a small book, which I was told was the girl's diary. I sat down and, laughing till my sides hurt, heard my voice finally blend with the others. Looking back, I wonder how I could have participated in mocking this girl when I knew perfectly well what it felt like to be mocked myself. I would like to say that if I were in that situation today I would react differently, but I can't honestly be sure. Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last. Too often our actions are determined by the moment.<sup>20</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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How important is peer pressure to the way we see ourselves and others? How did Eve Shalen's need to belong shape her identity? How did it affect the way she responded when another girl was mocked? Why does her response still trouble her? How do you like to think you would have responded to the incident?

Shalen concludes, "Often being accepted by others is more satisfying than being accepted by oneself, even though the satisfaction does not last." What does she mean? How is her story like that of the Bear in *the bear that wasn't*? How is it different?

"Hatred begins in the heart and not in the head. In so many instances we do not hate people because of a particular deed, but rather we find that deed ugly because we hate them."<sup>21</sup> How do Shalen's experiences support the statement? What experiences might call the statement into question?

In Japan, students labeled as "*itanshi*" – odd or different – are often subject to bullying by classmates. In 1992, the Japanese reported at least thirteen bullying-related murders at junior and senior high schools. "Children bully other children everywhere, of course," said Masatoshi Fukuda, head of the All-Japan Bullying Prevention Council. "But in Japan it is worse because the system itself seems to encourage the punishment of anyone who does not conform to social norms." A fifteen-year-old girl, for example, was

beaten to death in Toyonaka City after months of enduring insults for wearing hand-me-down public school uniforms. Her assailant told police, “She was an irritation in our faces... she dressed poorly when all other students have new uniforms every year.”<sup>22</sup>

What does the girl’s assailant mean when he says “She was an irritation in our faces?” Who is most likely to be a victim of bullying in our society?

A high-school student who was born in Cambodia wrote the following stanza in a poem called “You Have to Live in Somebody Else’s Country to Understand.” Compare it with the views expressed in this reading.

What is it like to be an outsider?  
What is it like to sit in the class where everyone has blond hair and you have black hair?  
What is it like when the teacher says, “Whoever wasn’t born here raise your hand.” And you are the only one.  
Then, when you raise your hand, everybody looks at you and makes fun of you.  
You have to live in somebody else’s country to understand.<sup>23</sup>

→The animated film, *Up Is Down*, looks at the world from the vantage point of a boy who walks on his head. It describes the attempts of the adults to make the boy conform to their point of view. The video is available from the Facing History Resource Center. Also available is another animated video, *Is It Always Right to Be Right?* It explores what happens to a society when various groups claim to be “right.” Eve Shalen appears in the video, *A Discussion with Elie Wiesel: Facing History Students Confront Hatred and Violence*.

## READING 9

### *Conformity and Identity*

Most people want to belong, but for someone, like Brandon Carson, the price of membership is too high. He writes:

I like who I am. I have come to accept myself on psychological as well as physical terms. I not only like myself, I like everyone around me. Today, for some gays and especially our youth, that is really hard to say. To learn to accept yourself as you are, and then to start liking yourself completely, is an obstacle some people never overcome. That alone is tough, but to finally do that and then start living a complete and fulfilling life is really too much, isn’t it? Is it really too much to ask, for us to be able to go out into society and hold jobs and pursue careers and live the “American Dream”? Should we stay closeted and have to

hide our feelings, forever living in a make-believe world, hoping that no one finds out about us? The pressure is inevitably on at full force, and even the smallest decisions could radically change our lives.

At sixteen, Carson decided to stop pretending and accept himself? His family and friends had more difficulty doing so. Carson still recalls the way a close friend responded. At the time, the two boys were sharing a post-office box.

I received a package one day that was torn at the edges. [My friend] didn't really think any harm could be done by opening the package, so he did. The package contained some books on gay youth that I had ordered. Now the cat was out of the bag.

He asked me about it and I decided to stop denying it. I came out to my best friend. I told him I was a homosexual, and that I was receiving literature about it. At this stage of my life it is still too painful to discuss the consequences of his rejection. I haven't gotten over the loss of my friend yet, and I probably never will. But I've learned some real valuable lessons about life, and I've learned them early, hopefully to prevent any further losses. I've learned people are unique in their own peculiar ways and I've learned that most people are more readily able to accept old ways than they are able to accept new ones.

I could go on and discuss the loss of my friend, the painful nights crying and wondering, the disgusted looks he gave me at school, and the fact that I had to face pain too early. But why should I tell what each person has to learn by himself... Everyone experiences pain, the emptiness of losing someone you love very much. But why should we be tormented and ridiculed? There are so many unanswered questions. Maybe someday, someone will realize what a ridiculous predicament society puts homosexuals in. Until then, I guess we must keep the faith and never stop fighting.<sup>24</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Make an identity chart for Brandon Carson. How does it explain why he found it so painful to come to terms with his identity?

Carson wonders, "Why should we be tormented and ridiculed?" How would you answer his question? What does it suggest about the way society shapes an individual's identity? About the difficulty of going against the group?

Eve Shalen (Reading 8) maintains that "usually people are made outcasts because they are in some way different from the larger group." Do you agree? How do Carson's experiences support your view? How do his experiences call your opinion into question?

Carson writes of the pain of rejection. It is a universal experience in that almost everyone experiences that pain at one time or another. Why does it hurt to be rejected? Are all rejections equally painful? Or do some hurt more than others? How did Carson handle rejection? How do you and your friends handle it? What strategies seem to be most effective?

## READING 10

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### *In the Barrio*

In reflecting on his experiences with stereotypes, Professor Joseph Suina wrote, “It was clear that I had become what I was expected to become. The power of stereotypes on those they are directed at is not minimal in its effect. I often wonder what happens to the many children in classrooms who are expected not to succeed because of their racial or ethnic heritage?”<sup>25</sup> Amelia Valdez, a college student, provides an answer to that question:

Growing up in the barrio was a protected life. It protected me from the dangers of the outside world. The outside world did not exist, but the oppression of it did. The barrio was a family within a family. Everyone around me was either an aunt or uncle or some distant cousin. The rest of the barrio was just there. We never spoke to each other except to say hello.

There were always boundaries that I could not cross within the barrio. We were all from the same race, but there was a constant struggle for possession. There was a territory called the “ghost town,” an area that everyone was afraid of. It had nothing to do with ghosts, but the people that lived there were seen as ghosts. There was a gang in the ghost town made up of Chicanos, and these people did not fear death. Every weekend someone would be shot or killed because someone overstepped the boundaries. The whole barrio did not have time to get scared because the violence was happening so fast. It was a place that felt like time was passing it by, and the fighting was a constant struggle for survival. It reminded me of a place that has no ending, like falling into a black hole.

We live on the side of the “Casianos” because this is the name of the park that we live in front of. The ghost town Chicanos did not mix with the Casianos Chicanos. The Casianos also had a gang, and these two groups did not mix or talk to each other. My brothers and cousins were in the Casianos gang. There is a creek with a bridge that separated the two areas, and there was always trouble between the two groups. There was one incident that I will never forget. My mother and I were

taking a shortcut through the ghost town. We crossed the bridge over to our side, and the Casianos Chicanos on our side were watching us cross. My house was about a half mile from the bridge, and in order to get to my house you needed to cross the park. As we were walking along, the ghost town Chicanos (the gang) started shooting at us, but my mother kept saying, "Run and don't stop until you reach the house." I kept hearing the bullets hitting the ground next to me. My heart kept beating faster as we approached the house, and my mother kept dragging me until we got to the house. I felt my mother sweat as she held my hand. But she held on and did not show any signs of fear. The guys on our side were returning fire, which led to some injuries on the other side. My mother called the police, but they never arrived, which was typical of them. The only way fights got resolved was by revenge. The next strike would be ours. These kinds of incidents always happened, and we lived in fear day by day. I never knew why these gangs were always fighting, but the fights were carried on from past generations. The gangs were at their strongest while I was growing up, and the only way to survive was to be in one. My brothers were always being pressured into joining. It was a sign of being "macho." The gang members were always angry, and their faces were so tight from the anger. I remembered my brother being shot once and nearly dying. There were always fights and gangs seeking revenge. The fights were endless, and I lost cousins and uncles, killed by other gangs. It is sad to know that even within the same race problems still existed.

The barrio taught me to survive in a world where you don't know what is going to happen. It prepared me for the struggles of daily life and the unexpected. It taught me to be strong when there was crisis. It also taught me to believe in myself. In the barrio you do not plan your goals; you just take them as they come. It is a constant struggle with life because you do not know what is going to happen the next day. It was a prep school for life, and the experiences were your grades. Nobody pays for this school but you...

The barrio always made me feel safe, but sometimes I felt the anger of being trapped. Even though I survived this seclusion, I did not know how the rest of the world lived. As a child, I felt the frustration of the barrio. Jobs were very limited, and the people did not have very many skills. There were always constant fights within families due to lack of income. There were some alcohol problems, which made things worse. It helped the people forget the problems and the frustrations...

Living in the barrio was a no-win situation because when someone tried to improve themselves or learn something different they would be hated. This was part of growing up in the barrio; you either learn to deal with it or get out. I hated that fact that people would actually get beaten up for trying to improve themselves. If you were caught reading or showing any interest in school, you were considered a "sissy." I can't believe the things I had to put up with living in the barrio. Some days I

would love it, and some days I would hate it. In junior high school I remember being chased after school by a girl who hated my guts.

She actually waited to beat me up and chase me around this fenced-in swimming pool. Around and around I went like a fool trying to escape from this madwoman. And, of course, no one was around to save me. Finally, I would get away on my own, but I did not look forward to the next day because of the fear of being beaten again. I don't know how I survived, but it was not easy.

I was always angry at myself for not running away farther. How could I escape from an angry barrio that protected itself from invasion by others? The barrio protected what was theirs and then some. So sometimes people took what was not theirs, but there were reasons why? Did we get a raw deal because we were different? Did we deserve to be isolated from others? I think the barrio had the right to be angry ever since the land got divided and was given to someone else. I am talking about the history of oppression of past generations. The land was taken away from my ancestors by the dividing of Mexico and Texas. The fighting continues on a sublevel; we make it better for future generations to survive without struggle...

I believe in myself and my people, who are rising very rapidly. My family had a lot to do with my beliefs and about how much we should join together to help one another. *La Raza* (the people) can accomplish and succeed what they set out to accomplish. The way to do this is to believe in yourself and forget the past because the future is already here. My family has supported me, and I have learned more about who I am. It gave me strength to survive in an unpredictable world.

Sometimes I feel confused about who I am and how I have come this far and survived. Before I came to the university I would not identify myself as Chicana. I seemed to want to assimilate into the white society, but only until I learned that being Mexican was not bad. It seemed that in the barrio there was always trouble, and the Mexicans were always looked upon as lazy. This was a label that other people gave us. For some Chicanos it is safe to remain in the barrio. For me I feel that getting away and learning about why we were labeled is frustrating, and understanding it is all I can do. There are certain questions I feel could never be answered. Why are Chicanos concentrated in one area? Why is there so much segregation? How far can we go before we, as Chicanos, catch up? After I learned that it was not bad to be a Chicana, I felt stronger. The anger was making me aware and helping me to understand. The more I learn about myself, the more I identify myself as Chicana. The only way I could do this was to understand the barrio. Being raised in the barrio was more a positive than a negative experience. I think the times are right to learn about being a Latino. It is important to me that I can always go back to the barrio and share my learning experience with the rest of the barrio.<sup>26</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Amelia Valdez makes a number of contradictory statements. She says, for example, that she felt safe in the barrio. Yet she describes it as a violent place. How can both statements be true? Find other contradictions in her account. Have you ever had similar feelings about a place? About an individual or a group? How did you resolve your contradictory feelings? How does she seem to resolve hers?

Does seeing one's own group as "good" mean that other groups are "evil" or "bad"? In the last few readings, people have moved from seeing others as "different" to seeing them as "dangerous" to viewing them as unworthy of life. How does each step in that process tend to dehumanize individuals? How does each step in the process pave the way for the next?

Make two identity charts for Valdez: one for the years she lived in the barrio and one for her college years. What similarities are there between the two charts? What differences seem most striking? How do you account for those differences?

Belonging is as important to Amelia Valdez as it is to Eve Shalen (Reading 8) and Brandon Carson (Reading 9). How did Valdez respond to group pressures to conform? Why did she value the support of the barrio? Why did she feel loyalty toward it? How did her response affect her identity? Her struggle for independence? Did it take courage for her to go against the group?

How did stereotypes shape life in Amelia Valdez's barrio? How did they shape the way she sees herself? The way others see her?

Valdez speaks of gang members as "angry." Compare their anger with the anger described in Gary Soto's short story (Reading 7). What similarities do you notice? What differences seem most striking?

How does Amelia Valdez define the word *barrio*? Why is it important for her and others in the community to know exactly where its boundaries lay? Why did she feel safe within those borders? Why did she come to find that safety stifling?

How can the isolation Valdez describes be broken? In your experience, what kinds of interaction destroy barriers? What kinds enhance existing barriers or raise new ones? Record your ideas in your journal.

How do you account for the fact that the word *neighborhood* is a positive term, but words like *ghetto* and *barrio* carry other connotations? What is a *ghetto*? Is a *barrio* a *ghetto*?

In its *Summary Report*, the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth states that young people are motivated to join gangs to "meet the same developmental needs that all youth are seeking - a sense of connection, belonging, and self-definition. In the gang,

they hope to find peer friendship, pride, an identity separate from their families, self-esteem enhancement, status, excitement, and the acquisition of resources. The positive social identity they gain from group membership partly depends on the group's perceived status and rank."<sup>27</sup> How does Valdez's account support the commission's findings?

The *Summary Report* further states, "In a sense, gangs have formed a subculture with their own values and standards of behavior. Incidents others might think trivial - 'disrespecting' someone, stepping on his shoes, insulting his girlfriend - are seen as violations of a code of honor, and taking a life is often seen as not only reasonable, but expected."<sup>28</sup> A subculture is a group set apart from the larger community by a distinctive set of cultural ideas. What ideas set gangs apart from the larger community? What attracts young people to gangs? How do you account for the fact that most young people do not belong to gangs?

→The *Summary Report* points out that 90 percent of all gang members are ethnic minorities. Why is the percentage so high? The report suggests one answer. "Part of the explanation... may lie in the stressful environment of poverty, unemployment, and economic and social inequality in which these ethnic minority youth live. These stressful conditions may limit youth's access to positive means of meeting developmental needs. As needs increase under difficult life conditions, the satisfaction gained from connection with a gang also increases." What insights does Valdez offer into the question of why minority youth join gangs? Compare those insights to those provided in "Lives in Hazard" a documentary about Latino gangs in East Los Angeles. The video is available from the Facing History Resource Center.

## READING 11

### *The Power of Separation*

Much as separation encouraged myths and misinformation in minority neighborhoods, it has also fostered myths and misinformation in white communities. Daniel Dyer, a white teacher, offers some insights into the power of those myths.

I was nearly 20 years old before I spoke to a black person. In 1944, I was born in Enid, Oklahoma, a small city whose racial divisions were codified in law and observed in daily life with a fierce devotion. In my boyhood I never questioned segregation, it was merely a fact of my existence, a fact as unremarkable to me as the blazing prairie heat in August.

I cannot claim to be free of all racism; after all, there is something unpleasantly permanent about many experiences and lessons of our childhood.

At the time, I saw nothing immoral, or even extraordinary, about the divided city I lived in. If the backs of the city buses bore painted signs that said COLORED ONLY; if the department stores featured separate drinking fountains and restrooms (WHITE and COLORED); if black citizens of Enid swam in different pools, played in different parks, attended different churches and schools (whites went to Enid High School, blacks to Booker T. Washington); well, that was the way it was supposed to be. That's all...

My racial beliefs were confirmed by everything I read, saw, and heard. Comic books contained racial stereotypes; movies and cartoons featured black characters who were superstitious, cowardly, dirty, ignorant, and incapable of speaking "real" English. The Bing Crosby-Fred Astaire Christmas classic, *Holiday Inn*, includes a blackface musical number that is never shown on TV these days. And would it be possible even to count the times I saw black characters in cartoons whose facial characteristics included puffy lips, broad noses, and – perhaps most common – eyes and teeth so white that they glowed in the dark?

When I left Oklahoma in the summer of 1956, my elementary school still had not complied with the *Brown v. Board of Education* guidelines [outlawing segregation] from two years before. And I still had never spoken to a black person.

My father joined the faculty of Hiram College in 1956, and I entered the seventh grade at the Hiram [Ohio] Local Schools. Racially, things were not all that different from Enid. There were no black students in the school system, not during the entire six years I attended it.

But for the first time in my life, I did participate in an activity with blacks: high-school basketball. Although most of the little rural schools in Portage County had few if any blacks in those years (1958-1962), both Windham and Ravenna township high schools had blacks on their teams. Although I recall no racial incidents at those games, I do remember being frightened before tip-off. I was playing, you see, against aliens.

Racist jokes and behavior were normal during my high school years. Wetting the end of your cigarette was called "nigger-lipping"; black recording artists were rarely played at school sock-hops. As a sophomore, I performed in blackface in the school play, enacting crude racial caricatures to the great amusement of the all-white audience.

And it is with great embarrassment that I remember driving with my equally brainless buddies through a black neighborhood in Ravenna, car windows down, yelling vile insults at black pedestrians. Those moments are the most unforgivable of my life.

My years as a student at Hiram College (1962-1966) changed my life. For the first time, I was attending classes with blacks, eating with them, living with them. There were not many, mind you, but their excellence in virtually every area of college life began quietly to invade the roots of my racism; before long, the entire tree was sick. And dying...

As the 1960s progressed, I was caught up in the civil rights movement, and though Malcolm X alarmed me (as he did many other white liberals), I was inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr., as I was instructed by black writers like James Baldwin, Ed Bullins, Leroi Jones, and Ralph Ellison.

After I began my career in education, many black students and colleagues – especially musician Bill Apppling (formerly of Western Reserve Academy) – confirmed in actuality what my reason had told me: My white skin is neither a badge of merit nor a divine birthmark. It is simply an accident.

I cannot claim to be free of all racism; after all, there is something unpleasantly permanent about many experiences and lessons of our childhood.

In the 1950s in Oklahoma, a shoe store had a machine called a fluoroscope. You could stick your feet inside; look in the view-finder, and, in a ghostly greenish glow, see how your new shoes fit. I remember going into that store all the time in the summer and sticking my feet repeatedly into that machine. I was fascinated by the X-ray image of the bones in my feet. I could see what at least part of me would look like as a skeleton.

The countless doses of radiation that machine so innocently gave on those long-ago summer days will always be with me and may even have permanently damaged me, even though shoe-store fluoroscopes are now as illegal as... well, as segregation.<sup>29</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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What caused Daniel Dyer to change the way he viewed African Americans? How did that change in attitude alter his behavior? What chances do you have to widen your perspective? What barriers are there to your doing so as an individual? As a member of a group?

What did Dyer learn about the *other* as a child? How did that learning distort his view of the world? How might it have led to violence? What does Dyer mean when he says, “I cannot claim to be free of all racism; after all, there is something unpleasantly permanent about many experiences and lessons of our childhood”?

One goal of education is to expose individuals to other ideas so that they weigh alternatives and make wise decisions. How did Dyer’s education affect his ability to reach that goal? How did Dyer eventually break his isolation? How have you broken yours?

Dictionaries define *superstition* as an irrational belief, act, or prejudice that can be injurious. Are Dyer’s views of African Americans based on superstition? On myth? Misinformation?

Cornel West, a professor of religion and the director of an Afro-American Studies program, asks, “How does one affirm one self without reenacting negative black stereotypes or overreacting to white supremacist ideals? The difficult and delicate quest for black identity is integral to any talk about racial equality. Yet it is not solely a political or economic matter. The quest for black identity involves self-respect and self-regard, realms inseparable from, yet not identical to, political power and economic status.”<sup>30</sup> How would you answer the questions he raises? How are those questions related to the legacy Dyer describes?

→ *Eyes on the Prize*, a television series about the American civil rights movement, alternates rare historical footage with contemporary interviews. All six segments are available from the Facing History Resource Center. The second, “Fighting Back”, traces the effects of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling that “separate but equal” schools and other public institutions are not equal. How does Dyer’s story support the court’s view of segregation?

## READING 12

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### *What’s in a Name?*

**L**abeling affects even those who have never experienced segregation. Miriam Thaggert described the impact it has had on her.

W. E. B. Du Bois [the African American writer and civil rights activist] called it “double-consciousness”: the feeling of “always looking at oneself through the eyes of others”... History is inevitably connected to double-consciousness, for as the old analogy goes, a person without knowledge of himself is like a tree without roots: nothing to draw upon for the strength to live. I have two histories, one which denies the significance of the other, and the struggle I endure is a frustrating attempt to unite the two. Double-consciousness affects all minorities in America, but I believe it is different for each person. There is a history that merges people together, but a unique perception of double-consciousness distinguishes the individual.

My own history lesson occurred the first time I was called a nigger and began, appropriately enough, at school while I was waiting for my mom to pick me up. I decided to play pick up sticks with a group of girls, and I won the few games we played. This was disturbing for one girl, Angela, who seemed to be accustomed to winning. According to her, I couldn’t have won on my own merits. I was cheating, she thought, which of course, I denied. My efforts to convince her of my innocence were in vain, since she seemed to have her own idea about why I had won.

“Nigger!” she cried. “Get away from me!”

The word came as a jolt and paralyzed my throat. I was tempted to launch an attack, but I thought it would be safer to flee. I did get away from her crying as I left. Fortunately, my mom arrived within a few minutes.

When I got into the car, my mother looked at my face and asked what was wrong. I told her what Angela said. Her immediate response was to ask, “Where is she?”

I attempted to dry my eyes and pointed her out. The car door opened with a force and slammed shut. “Stay in the car,” Mom said. I looked up in interest, my distress forgotten in childlike curiosity about what my mother would do.

I saw Mom walk up to the girl and point to the car. I ducked down as the girl looked over in my direction. When I came up, Mom had the girl by the shoulders and was shaking her back and forth.

“Don’t you ever call my daughter a nigger again? Do you hear me? Do you hear?” Amazingly, no one felt it was necessary to rescue the girl from my mother’s grip.

Later at home in the kitchen, my mom stood before me with her hands on her hips. “Tell me,” she said, “what does the word ‘nigger’ mean?”

I looked at the floor and thought. It suddenly occurred to me that I had no idea what the word meant. I searched my brain, looking for an incident in which I had heard someone say it, I tried to see where and when I had heard that awful word before, but I couldn’t. No one, within the hearing range of my-eight-year old ears had ever uttered the word. But why, then, did I react to that one word instantly, so violently, as if the word was familiar, but unspeakable, to my young lips?

“It’s a bad person,” I managed.

“Bad in what way?”

“It’s a person who is bad and mean and evil in every way.”

“Are you a nigger?”

“No.”

Here my mother got on her knees before me and gently took my small hands in her much larger ones. Softly, she questioned, “Then, Miriam, baby, why did you cry?”

That was a good question. I didn’t know. My mom’s question remained unanswered.

“All right,” she sighed. She got up, pulled a chair next to me, and sat down. “It’s time you learn something about yourself.” And there at the kitchen table, Mom proceeded to tell me about white and Black folks. I learned that I had a history that went further than the day I was born and a heritage that was a golden link between two distant continents. I realized that to be Black is not just to be a color. It is to have an attitude, a feeling. And now when I hear the word “nigger,” I am amazed at how such a small and simple word can contain so much

violence and racism, yet also summon intense self-respect in my certain and unquavering knowledge of what I am and what I am not.<sup>31</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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→ Words have tremendous power, particularly words that are used to define our identity or label us in some way. What names have you been called? What labels have been applied to you? What have you learned about the power of the spoken word? How do your experiences explain why Miriam Thaggert knew the word *nigger* was a derogatory term the first time she heard it? The video *Names Can Really Hurt* explores concepts related to stereotyping. It is available from the Facing History Resource Center.

The words *black* and *white* are loaded words in the English language. Ossie Davis, an African American author and actor, made a detailed study of the way each is treated in his copy of *Roget's Thesaurus*. There he found 120 synonyms for *black*, most with negative connotations. They included words like *blight, smut, smudge, sully, begrime, soot, dingy, murky, threatening, frowning, foreboding, forbidden, sinister, baneful, dismal, evil, wicked, malignant, deadly, secretive, unclean, unwashed, foul, blacklist, black book, black-hearted*, and so on. Incorporated in the same listing were such words as *Negro, nigger, and darky*.

In the same thesaurus, Davis found 134 synonyms for *white*, almost all of them with positive connotations: *purity, cleanness, bright, shining, fair, blonde, chaste, innocent, honorable, upright, just, straightforward, genuine, trustworthy, honesty*, and so on. *White* as a racial designation was, of course, included in the list. What power do words have to shape our attitudes? Values? Behavior?

Draw an identity chart for Miriam Thaggert. How is it like the one you made for Amelia Valdez? What differences seem most striking? How do you account for those differences?

Miriam Thaggert learned her history from her mother. Why wasn't that history taught in school? Whose history is taught at your school? How does our knowledge of our past shape the way we see ourselves? The way we view others?

It would be impossible to teach everyone's history in school. How then can we learn to find universal lessons in someone else's story? Record your ideas in your journal so that you can add to them as you continue reading this chapter and those that follow.

A poster published by a group called Concerned American Indian Parents shows four banners for baseball teams. The top one reads "Pittsburgh Negroes." The next one says "Kansas City Jews." The third one is "San

Diego Caucasians.” The last one reads “Cleveland Indians.” Under the four banners the group writes, “Maybe Now You Know How Native Americans Feel.” What message does the poster convey? What does it suggest about the power of names?

## READING 13

### *The Effects of Religious Stereotyping*

Like race, our religion is part of our identity. The word *religion* comes from a Latin word that means “to tie or bind together.” Modern dictionaries define *religion* as “an organized system of beliefs and rituals centering on a supernatural being or beings.” Those “beliefs and rituals” unite followers into a community of believers who share not only a faith but also a worldview.

Each of the world’s religions offers its followers a way of explaining the mysterious and the marvelous. Each also provides a code of conduct that guides individuals in their dealings with the people around them. They all have something else in common, too – they all teach respect for individual differences. Indeed, it has been said that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are more alike than they are different. Yet, often, in practicing their faith, individuals tend to stress the differences rather than focusing on the similarities. As a result, some come to regard those who choose to follow another religion as suspicious, different, and dangerous.

In reflecting on his experiences with religious stereotypes, Major General Robert Bailey Solomon told of the Friday night he found a fellow soldier sitting on his bunk.

He says, “Hey Solomon, where were you?” I said, “I’ve been out.” And he says, “Well, yeah, where were you?” I said, “Well, I went to religious services.” He looked at me and said, “Well, what are you, a Seventh Day Adventist?” I said, “No.” He said, “Well, what are you?” With a little trepidation, I said, “I’m Jewish.” He said, “Are your parents Jewish?” And he is looking at me very intently. I said, “Yes, both my father and my mother and my grandparents are Jewish.” And he said, “You don’t look Jewish.” And he is still looking at me. You remember the haircuts we had. Everybody looked alike. And so I finally said, “Well, why would you say I don’t look Jewish?” because I always thought I did. He said, “Well,” and he’s looking at my head, he says, “You don’t have horns.” I said, “Pardon me!” You see I had led a very sheltered life, and I said, “Are you kidding me?” He said, “Well, Jews have horns.” I said, “How many Jews do you know who have horns?” He said, “I never met a Jew before.” So I found out that of the

probably 220 people in that company, there weren't more than five of them that ever met a Jew. The only ones that had were a couple of kids who had lived in Chicago, a couple in Milwaukee.

Now, the interesting phenomenon is that I spent sixteen weeks in basic training and had probably somewhere between twenty and thirty prizefights. Usually it was some fellow who wanted to beat my brains out because I was Jewish. I didn't lose a fight. I got knocked on my keester a few times, but I think the fact that I was willing to fight sort of let them know that I was not a spindly little Jew that they could walk up to and push over.

As opposed to making me more Christianized, the military service, if anything, has made me more Jewish. I found nothing difficult about being in the army and I found nothing to compromise my faith in the army from the first day. I did find a lot of people who were anti-Semitic. And I also found out that many of those were anti-Semitic because they didn't have the foggiest notion of what Jews were, where they came from, what they might be, what they believed. They simply believed popular myths about Jews.<sup>32</sup>

Over forty years after Solomon's experience with myths and misinformation in the armed forces, Chana Schoenberger had a similar encounter. Hers took place in Wisconsin in the summer of 1993. She and a number of other students from high schools across the nation participated in the National Science Foundation Young Scholars program. She writes:

Represented among us were eight religions: Jewish, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, Methodist, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness and Lutheran. It was amazing, given the variety of backgrounds, to see the ignorance of some of the smartest young scholars on the subject of other religions.

On the first day, one girl mentioned that she had nine brothers and sisters. "Oh, are you Mormon?" asked another girl, who I knew was a Mormon herself. The first girl, shocked, replied, "No, I dress normal!" She thought Mormon was the same as Mennonite and the only thing she knew about either religion was that Mennonites don't, in her opinion, "dress normal." My friends, ever curious about Judaism, asked me about everything from our basic theology to food preferences. "How come, if Jesus was a Jew, Jews aren't Christian?" my Catholic roommate asked me in all seriousness. Brought up in a small Wisconsin town, she had never met a Jew before, nor had she met people from most of the other "strange" religions (anything but Catholic or mainstream Protestant).

Many of the other kids were the same way.

"Do you all still practice animal sacrifices?" a girl from a small town in Minnesota asked me once. I said no, laughed, and pointed out that this was the 20th century, but she had been absolutely serious. The only Jews she knew were the ones from the Bible.

Nobody was deliberately rude or anti-Semitic, but I got the feeling that I was representing the entire Jewish people through my actions. I realized that many of my friends would go back to their small towns thinking that all Jews liked Dairy Queen Blizzards and grilled cheese sandwiches. After all, that was true of all the Jews they knew (in most cases, me and the only other Jewish young scholar, period).

The most awful thing for me, however, was not the benign ignorance of my friends. Our biology professor had taken us on a field trip to the [Environmental Protection Agency] field site where he worked, and he was telling us about the project he was working on. He said that they had to make sure the EPA got its money's worth from the study – he “wouldn't wanted them to get Jewed.”

I was astounded. The professor had a doctorate, various other degrees and seemed to be a very intelligent man. He apparently had no idea that he had just made an anti-Semitic remark. The other Jewish girl in the group and I debated whether or not to say something to him about it, and although we agreed we would, neither of us ever did. Personally, it made me feel uncomfortable. For a high-school student to tell a professor who taught her class that he was a bigot seemed out of place to me, even if he was one.

What scares me about the experience, in fact about my whole visit to Wisconsin, was that I never met a really vicious anti-Semite or a malignantly prejudiced person. Many of the people I had been brought up to think that Jews (or Mormons or any other religion that's not mainstream Christian) were different and that difference was not good.<sup>33</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Write a working definition of *religion*. How does religion shape your identity? Your views of other people? Record your ideas in your journal.

What stereotypes about Jews shaped the way Solomon's fellow soldiers regarded him? How did those stereotypes affect the way he saw himself? Compare his responses to those stereotypes with those of Joseph Suina (Reading 4). What similarities do you notice? What differences seem most striking?

Chana Schoenberger says of her experience, “Ignorance was the problem I faced this summer. By itself, ignorance is not always a problem, but it leads to misunderstandings, prejudice, and hatred.” Would Solomon agree with her assessment of the problem? Why or why not? Do you agree? If so, for what reasons? If not, what was the problem? Have you ever had an experience like the one she describes? If so, how did you respond? How did it make you feel?

Schoenberger writes, “Represented among us were eight religions: Jewish, Roman Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, Methodist, Mormon, Jehovah's Witness

and Lutheran.” Members of all eight have encountered the kinds of myths and misinformation Schoenberger confronted. Choose one of the eight and research that faith’s history. What prejudices have members experienced in the United States? How has ignorance led “to misunderstandings, prejudice, and hatred?”

How are ignorance, misunderstanding, prejudice and hatred related? Use examples from your research as well as your own experiences and those of people you know to support your answer.

Martha Minow, a professor of law, writes, “When we identify one thing as unlike the others, we are dividing the world; we use our language to exclude, to distinguish – to discriminate.”<sup>34</sup> How do her comments apply to Solomon’s experience? To Schoenberger’s experience?

→In her novel, *A Boy of Old Prague*, Sulamith Ish-Kishor describes the effects of separation on Tomas, a young Christian boy who lived in the city of Prague in 1556, who learned to view the world through a lens distorted by hate, superstition, and rumor. He grows up accepting without question all that he heard about the Jews until the day his master sends the frightened boy to work for one. Only then are his beliefs challenged. For an excerpt from the novel, see Chapter 6. Multiple copies of the book are available from the Facing History Resource Center. After reading *A Boy of Old Prague*, compare Tomas’ views of Jews with those Robert Solomon and Chana Schoenberger encountered. What do your comparisons suggest about the factors that encourage myths and misinformation? About the factors that encourage people to widen their perspective and respect others?

## READING 14

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### *Anti-Judaism: A Case Study in Discrimination*

**R**obert Solomon and Chana Schoenberger were surprised to learn that others saw them only as members of a group. They were even more surprised at the qualities attributed to them as a result of myths and misinformation associated with that group. Where did those myths come from?

Individuals are always affected by the way their group is perceived. If the group is regarded as “outside” society, its members are vulnerable not only to stereotyping and prejudice but also to discrimination. For over two thousand years, Jews were considered outsiders. Their history reveals the relationships between the individual, the group, and the larger society.

This reading is a brief case study that reveals a number of concepts that can be applied to any religious group. After all, every group has at one time or another been the victim of discrimination.

Historians have traced many of those myths back over two thousand years to the time of the Roman Empire and the beginnings of Christianity. Historian Robert S. Wistrich writes. "Jesus was born, lived and died as a Jew in first-century Roman Palestine. He never conceived nor dreamed of a Christian Church. His father, mother, brothers and first disciples were all Jews, so that early Christianity can be said to have been essentially a rebellious Jewish sect that emerged out of... Judaism and had to define itself against the mother religion."<sup>35</sup>

Jesus lived at a time of crisis for Jews in Palestine. After the Romans conquered their country, they insisted that the Jews not only obey Roman laws but also worship Roman gods just as other conquered peoples did. When the Jews refused to do so, they were labeled "stubborn," "clannish," and "hostile." As pressure to accept Roman cultures mounted, Jews searched desperately for a way to maintain their religious identity. Some urged open rebellion against Rome. Others, including Jesus, argued that Jews must reform their religious practices and atone for their sins.

As each side marshaled arguments in defense of its position, the debate increased in intensity. Still, all of the attacks and counterattacks took place within the context of Judaism. Only when Jesus' disciples separated themselves from Judaism, did their words take on new meaning. They became, in the words of Krister Stendahl, a professor of Christian Studies, missiles hurled from a "mainly gentile Church toward the Synagogue across the street, from which now those Jews who followed Jesus had been excommunicated. And by that shift Christian anti-Judaism was born." He goes on to say:

Much has been written and more can be said about why and how that parting of the ways happened. No one factor was decisive. No one action or doctrine did it. As only a small number of Jews but an ever-increasing number of gentiles [or non-Jews] joined the Jesus movement, the outcome was Christian Churches, which, for all practical purposes, were gentile communities.

At the same time, Judaism, having lost its center in Jerusalem and its temple [after the failure of the Jewish revolt against Roman rule in 70 AD], found a new identity in the leadership of its sages and their interpretation of Torah [the Scriptures]... The Rabbinic consolidation of Judaism and the increasingly gentile constituency of Christianity transformed what had begun as a division within the Jewish community into two distinct communities, the Synagogue and the Church.

Once established, these two entities felt the necessity to define themselves by sharpening their differences. These differences appeared even greater once the Greek-speaking Jewish communities all over the Roman Empire partly died out and partly were absorbed into Christianity, while at the same time the language and thinking of Christianity was enlivened by Greek and Roman culture. Yet it was

when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century that Christian anti-Judaism first became a serious threat to Jewish existence. Political power plus religion was and is a dangerous brew.<sup>36</sup>

By the fourth century, the word Jew had become an expression of contempt among Christians. Laws now protected Christians from “contamination” by not allowing them to eat or engage in sexual relations with Jews. By the sixth century, Jews could not hold public office, employ Christian servants or slaves, or even show themselves in the streets during Holy Week – the week that commemorates the time between Jesus’ “Last Supper” and the crucifixion.

By the eleventh century, Jews were a small, all vulnerable minority in Western Europe. How vulnerable they truly were became clear in 1096, when Church leaders launched a series of crusades against the Muslims to win control of Palestine. On their way to the Middle East, the crusaders attacked Jewish communities throughout Western Europe. Abba Eban, a scholar and former Israeli diplomat, said of those attacks, “To understand the ferocity of the Christian assault on the Jews during this period, we must grasp the tight interrelationship of power and ideas. Political legitimacy was linked to religious belief. A man’s creed defined his social identity.”<sup>37</sup>

As persecutions mounted, thousands of Jews fled to Eastern Europe, where they found more freedom for a time. But whether they stayed behind or ventured further east, Jews increasingly found that they could not escape violence based on myths and misinformation. By the thirteenth century, church leaders in what is now Germany required that all Jews wear cone-shaped hats. In Latin countries, they were expected to sew a badge (usually a yellow disk) onto their clothing.

As outsiders Jews faced other restrictions as well. Peter Abelard, a twelfth-century philosopher and priest, described some of them in his *Dialogue between a Philosopher, a Jew, and a Christian*. It says of the Jews, “Heaven is their only place of refuge. If they want to travel to the nearest town, they have to buy protection with high sums of money from the Christian rulers who actually wish for their death so that they can confiscate their possessions. The Jews cannot own land or vineyards because there is nobody to vouch for their safekeeping. Thus, all that is left to them as a means of livelihood is the business of money lending, and this in turn brings the hatred of Christians upon them.”

Jews were allowed to become bankers, because the Church considered it a sin for a Christian to charge interest for a loan. Money lending was also contrary to Jewish laws. But Jews had few other ways of earning a living, so many were forced to become bankers. That occupation led to a new stereotype: that of the Jew as a greedy moneylender. It was a stereotype that would linger long after the French and Italians forced the Jews from the banking industry.

[Hatred] may spread throughout the land like the plague, so that a class, a religion, a nation, will become the victim of popular hatred without anyone knowing exactly how it all began; and people will disagree, and even quarrel among themselves, about the real reason for its existence; and no one foresees the inevitable consequences.

By the sixteenth century, except for a few business encounters, Jews were totally isolated from their Christian neighbors. In many countries, people of the Jewish faith were now confined to a ghetto, a section of a city or town that was enclosed by high walls and guarded by Christian gatekeepers. With more rigid separation came new myths and misinformation. Increasingly Jews were portrayed as agents of the devil responsible for every catastrophe from random crime to plague and drought. Artists now portrayed Jews with horns, tails, and evil faces. Priests and scholars elaborated on the idea that Jews were evil creatures who were less than human in sermons and lectures.

By the sixteenth century, there were new divisions within Christian Europe. In 1517, in what is now Germany, Martin Luther protested corruption in the Catholic Church by calling on Church leaders to reform. Instead they branded him a heretic and excommunicated him from the Church. The result was the Protestant Reformation, which ultimately led to the founding of new Christian churches in Western Europe. It also led to religious wars, this time between Catholics and Protestants.

Luther had hoped to convert many Jews to Christianity. In 1523, he told his followers that “we in our turn ought to treat the Jews in a brotherly manner in order that we might convert some of them ... we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ.”<sup>38</sup> But when Jews refused to convert, an angry Luther wrote in part:

First, their synagogues or churches should be set on fire, and whatever does not burn up should be covered or spread over with dirt so that no one may ever be able to see a cinder or stone of it... Secondly, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. For they perpetrate the same things there they do in their synagogues. For this reason they ought to be put under one roof or in a stable, like gypsies, in order that they may realise that they are not masters in this land, as they boast, but miserable captives.<sup>39</sup>

Other Protestant leaders were more tolerant of Jews, in part because their quarrel was with Catholics. But even among those Protestants, the old stereotypes lingered on. Indeed they survived long after the gradual emancipation of the Jews in the 1700s and 1800s. As Malcolm Hay, a Catholic historian, explains: “Men are not born with hatred in their blood. The infection is usually acquired by contact; it may be injected deliberately or even unconsciously, by parents, or by teachers... The disease may spread throughout the land like the plague, so that a class, a religion, a nation, will become the victim of popular hatred without anyone knowing exactly how it all began; and people will disagree, and even quarrel among themselves, about the real reason for its existence; and no one foresees the inevitable consequences.”<sup>40</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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Rabbi Akiba, a great teacher who lived in Palestine in the days of Roman rule, was once asked to define Judaism. He replied, “What is distasteful unto you, do not do unto your neighbors. All else is commentary.” What is he suggesting is the essence of his faith? That teaching is basic to most other religions as well. If it is part of the teaching of most religions, how do you account for the myths and misinformation that often surround the way individuals regard people of other faiths?

Historian Robert S. Wistrich describes the stereotype of the Jews as being “divorced completely from the real, concrete Jews of everyday life.” What allows such a stereotype to flourish? What part do leaders play in keeping them alive? What part does segregation play? Why do people cling to stereotypes, even when they have no basis in reality? Record your ideas in your journal. You may wish to test those ideas by researching another religion. Are your answers equally true of the group you researched?

How does a quarrel within a group differ from one between groups? Are there things you can say to a friend or family member than you would not say to outsiders? What happens when words used in a “family quarrel” move outside the family?

Why do leaders choose to stir up hatred? At what times are appeals to hatred most likely to succeed? In times of war? Economic stress? Change?

Write a working definition of the word *disciple*. What are the differences between a disciple and other followers? What is the relationship between a disciple and the founder of a faith?

By the seventh century, both Christians and Jews were defining themselves in relation to yet another religion, one that developed in the deserts of the Arabian Peninsula. Although it was profoundly influenced by both Christianity and Judaism, Islam is a separate faith based on the teachings of Muhammad, its founder. Within a hundred years of his death, his disciples had built a huge empire in Southwest Asia and North Africa. Within that empire, Jews and Christians were viewed as “outsiders.” As early as the eighth century, the Muslims required both groups to identify themselves through the color of their clothing. Jewish men were forced to wear yellow and Christians blue. Non-Muslim women had to wear shoes that did not match, in combinations of black with white or red. Why do you think outsiders in Christian Europe and the Muslim Empire were required to wear distinctive clothing? How do you think such clothing shaped the way those individuals were perceived? The way they viewed themselves?

What did Abba Eban mean when he said that power and ideas are interrelated? Do you agree? What is the legacy of that interrelationship?

What part does language play in the level of tolerance one group has for another? In stirring hatred? In dehumanizing a group of people? In the way victims of that process may view themselves?

In October, 1965, the Roman Catholic Church issued the now famous *Nostra Aetate*. In it, the Church condemns “all forms of antisemitism and discrimination.” The document states that “liturgical passages that show the Jewish people will be carefully interpreted by the Church to avoid prejudice.” In 1994, the Lutheran Church issued a similar statement.

Father Robert Bullock, pastor of Our Lady of Sorrows Church in Sharon, Massachusetts, and a member of the Facing History and Ourselves Board of Directors, observes that to be *ecumenical* is to respect differences among people. Write a working definition for the word *ecumenical*. It comes from a Greek word meaning “of the whole world.” Why is that an appropriate name?

Hostility toward a particular person can usually be resolved through a confrontation that leads to dialogue. But hostility toward a group is much harder to resolve – how can one confront a group? Although many students have little or no contact with people who follow other religions, they can find answers to their questions through research or by inviting speakers to class. Professor Krister Stendahl offers a few suggestions for making such encounters more meaningful.

1. Let the others define themselves. We all tend to define or describe the other in negative contrast to ourselves. Hence our descriptions of the other often are a breach of the commandment, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”
2. Compare equal to equal. If you compare the ideal of your own with the average of the other, not to say the best of your own with the worst of the other, you will score false victories and truth will suffer...
3. The highest and indispensable stage of dialogue is what I like to call Holy Envy: to see something in the other that one finds beautiful, but it is not one’s own; to want to learn; to want the other to tell more about it, tell us so that we get enriched, warmed, fascinated.<sup>41</sup>

What would happen if Stendahl’s rules were applied to *all* dialogues – not just religious ones? What effect might they have on discussions at your school? In your community?

Unlike the other readings in this chapter, this one is a historical case study. It introduces ideas and concepts important to Facing History. After completing this reading, some students may ask, “What does this history have to do with me?” How would you answer them? Record your response in your journal so that you can refer to it later.

## READING 15

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### *The Principle of Tolerance*

The readings in this chapter are at least in part about identity and the consequences of being defined by others. Much of world history documents the struggle of people to build societies that include and protect everyone. The concept of a tolerant society is a complicated one. Within every society are many competing ideas, values, and perspectives. Professor Cornel West suggests one way that people who disagree on fundamental issues can learn to live together.

The interplay of individuality and unity is not one of uniformity and unanimity imposed from above but rather of conflict among diverse groups that reach a dynamic consensus subject to questioning and criticism. As with a soloist in a jazz quartet, quintet or band, individuality is promoted in order to sustain and increase the creative tension with the group – a tension that yields higher levels of performance to achieve the aim of the collective project. This kind of critical and democratic sensibility flies in the face of any policing of borders and boundaries of “blackness,” “maleness,” “femaleness,” or “whiteness.”<sup>42</sup>

In the television series, *The Ascent of Man*, and in the book based on that series, scientist Jacob Bronowski expressed that idea a little differently. He based his argument on the idea that tolerance is not just a desirable quality but an essential one. He insisted that without it, society is doomed. Bronowski went on to define *tolerance* by describing the work of scientists in the early 1900s. They made tremendous advances by being open to new ideas and willing to challenge old truths.

Did physics in the 1920s really consist of argument, seminar, discussion, dispute? Yes, it did. Yes, it still does. The people who met here, [in the university town of Göttingen, Germany] the people who meet in laboratories still, only end their work with a mathematical formulation. They begin it by trying to solve conceptual riddles. The riddles of the sub-atomic particles – of the electrons and the rest – are mental riddles.<sup>43</sup>

Those riddles eventually led to a new theory.

...Werner Heisenberg gave a new characterization of the electron. Yes, it is a particle, he said, but a particle which yields only limited information. That is, you can specify where it is at this instant, but then you cannot impose on it a specific speed and direction at the setting-off. Or conversely, if you insist that you are going to fire it at a certain

speed in a certain direction, then you cannot specify exactly what its starting-point is – or, of course, its end-point.

That sounds like a very crude characterization. It is not. Heisenberg gave it depth by making it precise. The information that the electron carries is limited in its totality. That is, for instance, its speed and its position fit together in such a way that they are confined by the tolerance of the quantum. This is the profound idea: one of the great scientific ideas, not only of the twentieth century, but in the history of science.

Heisenberg called this the Principle of Uncertainty. In one sense, it is a robust principle of the everyday. We know that we cannot ask the world to be exact. If an object (a familiar face, for example) had to be exactly the same before we recognized it, we would never recognize it from one day to the next. We recognize the object to be the same because it is much the same; it is never exactly like it was, it is tolerably like. In the act of recognition, a judgment is built in – an area of tolerance or uncertainty. So Heisenberg's principle says that no events, not even atomic events, can be described with certainty, that is, with zero tolerance...

Yet the Principle of Uncertainty is a bad name. In science or outside it, we are not uncertain; our knowledge is merely confined within a certain tolerance. We should call it the Principle of Tolerance. And I propose that name in two senses. First, in the engineering sense. Science has progressed step by step, the most successful enterprise in the ascent of man, because it has understood that the exchange of information between man and nature, and man and man, can only take place with a certain tolerance. But second, I also use the word passionately about the real world. All knowledge, all information between human beings can only be exchanged within a play of tolerance. And that is true whether the exchange is in science, or in literature, or in religion, or in politics, or even in any form of thought that aspires to dogma.<sup>44</sup>

## CONNECTIONS

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What is certainty and why do people seek it? Is certainty the opposite of tolerance? Or is it a “comfortable myth”? If so, does living with tolerance mean living with discomfort? Write working definitions of both *tolerance* and *absolute certainty*.

Some people object to the word *tolerate*. They note that one meaning of the word is “to put up with or endure.” They argue that people ought to do more than tolerate each other. Do you agree? If so, what word would you substitute for toleration? If not, how would you respond to the argument? What lies beyond tolerance?

How can people who disagree on fundamental issues live together? What is West's response to that question? How is it similar to Bronowski's? To your own response? How does it differ?

How do you build a society that recognizes differences? That is fair to everyone? What part do rules play in creating such a society? What compromises do individuals have to make?

Do you agree with Bronowski when he insists that without tolerance, society is doomed. Record your opinion in your journal so that you can refer back to it as you read the chapters that follow.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Deborah Tannen, preface to *You Just Don't Understand* (Morrow, 1990), 16.
- <sup>2</sup> Frank Tashlin, *the bear that wasn't* (1946; reprint, Dover Publications, 1962). Reprinted by permission of the heirs to the Frank Tashlin Trust.
- <sup>3</sup> Anthony Wright, "Little Boxes," *Points of View* (Amherst College) 1990.
- <sup>4</sup> Tannen, preface to *You Just Don't Understand*, 16.
- <sup>5</sup> Richard Lewontin, et al. *Not in Our Genes* (Pantheon, 1990), 127.
- <sup>6</sup> Allan G. Johnson. *Human Arrangements* (Harcourt Brace, 1986), 353.
- <sup>7</sup> Lewontin, *Not in Our Genes*, 121.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.
- <sup>9</sup> Joseph H. Suina, "Preserving Many Worlds: The Cultural Dimension Since 1492" (paper presented at the ISAM Annual Conference: 1492-1992 Reconsidered, Dana Hall School, 5 May, 1992), 20-21.
- <sup>10</sup> "Letter to the Editor" by Jeanne Park, *New York Times*, 20 April, 1990. Copyright 1990 by The New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.
- <sup>11</sup> Maya Angelou, interview by Bill Moyers, *Facing Evil*, (Public Affairs Television).
- <sup>12</sup> *Creativity with Bill Moyers*, "A Portrait of Maya Angelou," (Public Broadcasting System, 1985).
- <sup>13</sup> Julius Lester, *Falling Pieces of the Broken Sky* (Little Brown, 1990), 69. Reprinted by permission.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-73.
- <sup>15</sup> Quoted in *This Is About Vision: Interviews with Southern Writers*, ed. John F. Crawford and Annie O. Eysturoy, (University of New Mexico Press, 1990), 189.
- <sup>16</sup> James Gilligan, "Shame and Humiliation: The Emotions of Individual and Collective Violence" (paper presented at the 1991 Erikson Lectures, Harvard University), 11.
- <sup>17</sup> Gary Soto, "Fear," in *Living Up the Street; Narrative Recollections*, (Strawberry Hill Press, 1985) 59-62.
- <sup>18</sup> Gilligan, "Shame and Humiliation," 8.
- <sup>19</sup> Jonah Kadish, *A Discussion with Elie Wiesel: Facing History Students Confront Hatred and Violence*. (Facing History and Ourselves, 1993).
- <sup>20</sup> Eve Shalen, *Ibid.*
- <sup>21</sup> Dagobert D. Runes, *The Jew and the Cross* (Citadel Press, 1966), 30-31.
- <sup>22</sup> Colin Nickerson, "In Japan, 'Different' Is Dangerous," *The Boston Globe*, 24, January 1993.
- <sup>23</sup> Noy Chou, "You Have to Live in Somebody Else's Country to Understand." In *A World of Difference* Resource Guide (Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and Facing History and Ourselves, 1986).
- <sup>24</sup> From *One Teenager in Ten: Writings by Gay and Lesbian Youth*, ed. Ann Heron, (Alyson Publications, 1983), 15, 17-18.
- <sup>25</sup> Joseph H. Suina, "Preserving Many Worlds," 22.
- <sup>26</sup> Amelia Valdez, "Surviving in the Barrio." In *Inside Separate Worlds*, ed. David Schoem, (University of Michigan Press, 1991), 21-33.

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- <sup>27</sup> The American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, *Violence & Youth: Psychology's Response*. Vol. 1 Summary Report (American Psychological Association, 1993), 28-29.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.
- <sup>29</sup> Daniel Dyer, "Racial Background Is Not a Halo But an Accident," *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 7 January 1993. Reprinted by permission.
- <sup>30</sup> Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Beacon Press, 1993), 65-66.
- <sup>31</sup> "Double Vision" by Miriam Thaggert from *The HarperCollins Guide to Writing with Sourcebook* by Nancy Sommers and Linda Simon, 29-32. Copyright 1993 by Nancy Somers and Linda Simon. Reprinted by permission of HarperCollins College Publishers
- <sup>32</sup> Howard Simons, *Jewish Times: Voices of the American Jewish Experience* (Houghton Mifflin, 1988), 239-240.
- <sup>33</sup> Chana Schoenberger, "Getting to Know About You and Me," *Newsweek*, September 20, 1993, 8.
- <sup>34</sup> Martha Minow, *Making All the Difference* (Cornell University Press, 1990), 3.
- <sup>35</sup> Robert Wistrich, *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred* (Pantheon, 1991), 7.
- <sup>36</sup> Krister Stendahl, "Can Christianity Shed Its Anti-Judaism?" *Brandeis Review*, Spring, 1992, 26.
- <sup>37</sup> Abba Eban, *Heritage: Civilization and the Jews* (Summit Books, 1984), 160.
- <sup>38</sup> Robert Wistrich, *Antisemitism*, 39.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 39-40.
- <sup>40</sup> Malcom Hay, *Thy Brother's Blood: The Roots of Antisemitism* (Hart Publishing Co., 1975), 3.
- <sup>41</sup> Krister Stendahl, "Can Christianity Shed Its Anti-Judaism?" 27.
- <sup>42</sup> Cornel West, *Race Matters*, 105.
- <sup>43</sup> From *THE ASCENT OF MAN* by Jacob Bronowski. Copyright 1973 by J. Bronowski. By permission of Little, Brown and Company.
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 364-365.