

ASSIGNMENT: MY FAMILY AND RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION (developed by Teemom Williams)

Note: The setup for this second part of a 2-part project can be found in Section 1 Conceptual Frameworks. What follows is the second part.

PART 2 OF 2-PART PROJECT: MY FAMILY & RELIGIOUS OPPRESSION

Earlier in the semester you constructed a family genogram and told your family's story. You then looked at your family through the lens of race. The purpose of those activities was to help you discover the rich complexity of your family and personal history. History is not a thing of the past; it is constantly present and is a part of our lives whether we know it or not. For this assignment you will examine your family and yourself through the lens of religious identity. In this section we want you to examine your socialization and your family's attitudes towards minority religious communities (Bahai, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Native American religions/ spiritualities, Sikh, etc) as well as to the dominant Christian. As you review these questions, please be sure to include these groups in your line of questioning.

The Assignment: 2nd part of 2-part Project

Your assignment is to write a paper (5 page minimum) on your family's history, experiences and socialization around religion. Key questions and areas of inquiry include:

- What is your family's religious background? *What is your family's religious identity? How long has your family been a member of this religion? What does it mean to them (and to you) to be a member of this religion? Why does your family belong to this particular religion? Is there a member of your family that converted or married a partner of another religion? How are they treated? What is their story? How would your family feel if YOU were to convert to another religion? Would their reaction differ based upon the religion (Islam vs. Judaism vs. Hindu)? Why or why not?*
- Describe your family's socialization process around religion. *What does your family's religion tell you about members of other religions, both minority religious communities and the dominant Christian community? What stereotypes and messages were your family members socialized with regarding members of other religions? Do the messages received differ from the teachings of the religion? If so, how? Are there different messages for different religions (i.e. Muslims, vs. Buddhist vs. Hindus and people of minority religious and Christian religions)? If so, what are they? Why are they different? What were your family members taught about their own religious group? From where did they receive these messages? What are their attitudes and feelings today? Do they differ from their past attitudes and feelings? If so, how? What brought about the change? If not, why not? What were the experiences that have led to the reinforcement of their socialization? What were your parents taught about Bahai, Buddhist, Christianity, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Native American religions and spiritualities, Sikh, etc? Where did they receive these messages? On what basis are these views held? Be sure to critically analyze these messages.*
- What are some of your family's historical experiences around religious identity? *How has your family historically interacted with Bahai, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Native American religions/ spiritualities, Sikh, etc) as compared with Christian communities? Have they acted in prejudiced or discriminatory ways? Have they committed a hate crime? Have they embraced people of various faiths? Have they supported people of other faiths that have been targeted? Was someone in your family killed or assaulted because of their religious identity? Did someone in your family kill or assault someone because of his or her religious identity? How did your family feel about Muslims prior to 9/11? Has that changed? Does your family understand the difference between Arabs as a group and Muslims as a group, i.e. that not all Arabs are Muslim? Was your family involved somehow in the Jewish holocaust or WWII?*

In conducting the research for your paper, you will be expected to interview **at least 3 members of your family**. In addition to general information about your family, be sure to note which 3 members of your family you interviewed, and how their answers may be similar or different. It may be helpful for you to interview one person from each of the existing generations of your family, if possible. This will give you a cross-generational perspective on the racial socialization of your family. Critically analyze the comments made by your family using the concepts and theories covered in class.

Do not be afraid to dig deep and uncover your family's "secrets". It is by uncovering these secrets and bringing them to light that we break the spell of silence. In this way we destroy the power of the secret and

neutralize its power over our families and ourselves. Remember, history is not the domain of “everyone else” – we are all active participants.