

Section 4: Religious Oppression

Activity on Islamophobia: “Shouting across the Divide.”

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This activity starts with a radio clip from National Public Radio’s show, “This American Life,” a dramatic story of how Islamophobia impacts one family after September 11th. It is a powerful way to begin a dialogue with students particularly focused on how religious oppression plays out in schools, and the impact on young people, and families.

The episode originally aired in 2006, and is NPR “This American Life” episode #322: Shouting Across the Divide, and the story is “Act One: Which One of These is not Like the Others?” by Alix Spiegel and runs for 33 minutes. The story is accessible at the link below.

<http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/322/shouting-across-the-divide>

Activity Description:

- Need a minimum of 45–60 minutes (clip is 33 minutes.)
 - Introduce audio clip—story of what happens to a Muslim family after September 11th. It is important to acknowledge that the clip is rather intense, and can be painful to listen to, so they should take care of themselves as they listen.
 - Instruct students to listen carefully to the episode, and take notes and write down examples of religious oppression (individual, institutional, and societal/ cultural) — paying particular attention to the school system.
 - After the episode ends, invite students to do a 3–5 minute free write as to their initial feelings after listening to the episode.
 - Invite students to discuss the following questions, either in small groups, or as a class:
 - What examples of religious oppression did you hear, and what was their impact on the family?
 - What was the school system’s role in what happened (teacher, principal, school district, parents, etc.)? How could things have played out differently?
 - If you lived in this town, how could you have been an ally to this family?
 - Do you agree with the Justice department’s decision in this case? Why or why not?
 - Do you agree with Serry’s belief that this was a fluke incident and does not reflect the beliefs of America? Why or why not? Why do you think she needs to hold this belief?
 - Note—you may also assign the clip as an assignment for students to listen to outside of class since it is accessible via the internet.