



# Mindful Exploration

## Community Connections – Valuing Differences



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### TOPIC

Community Connections –  
Building Relationships (Mindful  
Explorations)

### GRADE LEVEL

6th-8th grade

### DURATION

40 minutes (10 min per lesson)

### SUBJECT AREA

Character Development, ELA,  
Homeroom, Advisory

### DESCRIPTION OF THE LESSON

In this Mindful Exploration, students will consider the value of individuality within the structure of the community. Students will recognize that individual expressions of cultural, ethnic, religious heritage or an individual's personality are important to the development of a functional community. Students will listen to testimony from individuals describing instances of individual expression within a community, transference of identity across communities, and the impact of reaching out to communities to grow perspective. By the end of this activity, students will reflect on how they can practice celebrating and appreciating individual differences within a community as a way to strengthen and foster community connections in their own lives.

This activity features USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive testimonies from Jack Adler, a Holocaust survivor; Mohammed Dajani Daoudi, a witness to contemporary Antisemitism; and Alain Bertrand Lazaret, witness to the Central African Republic Conflict.

*This curriculum is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education. Established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from a grant from the Marin County Office of Education and the State of California.*

### STANDARDS ADDRESSED

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.W.10.

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9.

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

### MATERIALS

The following materials can be downloaded from **Community Connections - Valuing Differences: Mindful Explorations** on IWitness

- *Student Handout: Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Valuing Differences*
- Clips of testimony: Jack Adler (1:08 min), Mohammad Dajani Daoudi (27 sec), and Alain Bertrand Lazaret (52 sec)

### LEARNING AIMS

Students will:

- Recognize the importance of individual expression within a community and the role this plays in learning to value and respect community members.
- Analyze audiovisual testimony and draw conclusions supported with evidence about the value of self expression and learning to respect community member's individual expressions and identities.
- Reflect on how they can practice celebrating and appreciating individual differences within a community as a way to strengthen and foster community connections in their own lives.



## Mindful Exploration

# Community Connections – Valuing Differences

### Consider

1. **ME Purpose** Explain to students that over the course of four days they will complete three mindful explorations and one final reflection that assesses their understanding of the importance of individual expressions of identity to strengthen community connections. By the end of the lesson, students will have considered ways in which expressions of individuality contribute to healthy community connections that benefit themselves and others.
2. **Mindful Exploration Handout** Pass out the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Valuing Differences*. Read the brief introduction and focus question together. Explain that over the course of three lessons the class will listen to clips of testimony that will help them reflect on this topic.

#### Student Handout Question:

**Focus Question:** *How do you maintain your individuality within your community?*

Article 29 of the **Declaration of Human Rights** states that “Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible” This means that we all owe a duty to contribute to, respect, and support our community so long as our community allows us to develop and express our full selves. In valuing differences, it allows for individuals to feel part of a community that accepts their individuality.

The following three individuals—Jack Alder, Mohammed Dajani Daoudi, and Alain Bertrand Lazaret—all share stories of individuals who express their individual identities while still being members of a larger community. As you listen to each of their testimonies, consider the ways their membership in one or more communities contributed to their sense of self and expanded their understanding of themselves and others.

### Collect

3. **Clips of Testimony** Each day, play one of the three clips of testimony twice. Begin by providing a brief introduction of each individual and the content of the clip... (see clip information and biographies below).
4. **First Viewing** Have students listen to the clip of testimony and answer any clarifying questions they may have. Then, have students read and respond to the first connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Valuing Differences*. To encourage collaboration, have students pair with a partner to discuss their response to the first connected question. Then, have them share key takeaways from their discussion with the whole group.

*Supportive sentence starters:*

- *X expressed their individuality with their community by \_\_\_\_\_, This is important to note because*

*X's individuality/individual identity contributed to individual or community well being by \_\_\_\_\_.*

5. **Second Viewing** After this viewing, have students respond to the second connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Building Relationships*. To encourage collaboration, have students share their responses to the second connected question with their partner. Then, have them share key takeaways from their discussion with the whole group.

*Supportive sentence starters:*

- *A lesson I could take away to help me recognize and value expressions of individuality within a community in my own life is...*

6. **Repeat** Follow the same format for each clip of testimony. Display the content of the clip and the biography (all biographies available below). As a way for students to demonstrate what they have learned about the individual in the testimony, you may ask students to share what they find most interesting about the individual based on the information provided or what they might be more curious about.

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# Community Connections – Valuing Differences

## Collect con't

### Exploration 1

#### Clip 1: Jack Adler

*In this clip, Jack, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, talks about the small ways he rebelled against his father's Hasidic community's beliefs as a child. He stated that he preferred the Reform traditions of his grandparents and extended family members. Pay attention to how Jack expresses himself within the Hasidic community he was born into.*

**Jack Adler** (born Yakov Szlomo Adler), son of Cemach and Faiga, was born in Pabianice, Poland, on February 1, 1929. He had one brother, Chaim, and two sisters, Ester and Pesa. The Adler family were Hasidic Jews. On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland, and World War II began. As a result of the antisemitic ideology and laws that came with the Nazi occupation of Poland, life began to change for the Jews of Pabianice. Jack was in this ghetto until May 1942, when he was sent to the Lodz ghetto. He would be sent to three and was liberated by the US Army on May 1, 1945. Jack was the only member of his immediate family to survive the Holocaust. This interview was conducted on August 7, 1996, in Denver, Colorado.

*Student Handout Questions:*

- *In what ways does Jack rebel against the expectations of his community? How might this rebellion allow him to express his full self? How does Jack maintain his individuality in this community?*
- *What does Jack's clip of testimony help you understand about how to express your individuality while still respecting the community?*

### Exploration 2

#### Clip 2: Mohammed Dajani Daoudi

*In this clip, Mohammed, an interviewee who witnessed contemporary antisemitism, shares how his school community taught him tolerance. Consider the ease with which he was able to navigate across these various communities.*

**Mohammed Dajani Daoudi** was born on March 19, 1946, in British Mandate Palestine (now Israel). Although a Muslim, Mohammed attended a Quaker school in Ramallah. Because the school's teachings did not distinguish particular ethnic or religious groups as being better or worse and accepted people for who they were and what they believed, his schooling had a profound impact on him. Among other activities, Mohammed began Holocaust education among Palestinians who had strongly denied the Holocaust. Mohammed continues to maintain academic, social, and political ventures between Arab and Israeli groups. Mohammed was interviewed on October 3, 2015, in Los Angeles, California.

*Student Handout Questions:*

- *How does Mohammed's list of communities speak to how he asserts his own identity? Why is this ability to understand different communities important?*
- *What does Mohammed's clip of testimony help you understand about how to express your individuality while still respecting the various communities with which you engage?*

### Exploration 3

#### Clip 3: Alain Bertrand Lazaret

*In this clip, Alain, a witness of the Central African Republic Conflict, shares his memory of growing up in his community before the conflicts started. He has fond memories of his community being a diverse collection of individuals who existed in harmony despite their various beliefs.*

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### Collect con't

**Alain Bertrand Lazaret** was born into a Christian family in Kembe in the Central African Republic on July 11, 1976. His father was a teacher and his family moved frequently so he had a chance to be a member of a variety of communities. His parents taught him to respect everyone, regardless of their religion or background. Alain was interviewed about his experience witnessing the conflict in his country on January 18, 2016, in Kigali City, Rwanda.

*Student Handout Questions:*

- How does Alain describe the relationships across various communities in the country he lived in as a child? How might Alain's upbringing have impacted how he engages with the world?
- What does Alain's clip of testimony help you understand about how to express your individuality while still respecting the various communities with which you engage?

### Construct

7. **Final Reflection (Exploration 4)** After viewing and answering questions related to the third clip, direct students to the Final Reflection section of the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Valuing Differences*. Encourage students to work quietly and respond on their paper.

*Student Handout Questions:*

- *Final Reflection: Jack, Mohammed, and Alain all demonstrate the ability of community members to maintain their individuality while still being a valued member of their community.*
- *Consider the various communities you are part of. These may include your cultural, religious, school, or local communities. In what ways do your various communities support you in expressing your individual identity? How do you support others in your communities to express their individual identities? How do these individual variations improve and strengthen the communities you belong to? Choose one of the communities you belong to. In the space below, make a T-chart noting the ways you conform to the community norms and the ways you express your individuality. How does your ability to express your individuality in the community strengthen your connection to this community? How might this freedom of expression allow you to become more respectful of others within the various communities you belong to? Why might this be important to contributing to a fairer or more just society? Write a brief reflection addressing these prompts below your T-chart. Be prepared to share your thoughts with a partner.*

### Communicate

8. **Discuss** To close this Mindful Exploration, ask volunteers to reflect on their responses to the final reflection.

### Additional Note to Teacher

If assigning the Mindful Exploration activity series to students, we recommend asking students to keep a Mindful Explorations reflection journal. Using a reflection journal or folder to maintain their responses will provide them a compilation of their thoughts, enabling them to see how their thinking develops.

Mindful Explorations serve as short daily activities that develop introspection and social-emotional learning. Students are asked to reflect on the challenges they may face, the goals they have for themselves and the relationships they aspire to have in their lives. Each lesson is designed to be completed over the course of the week and includes an opening focus question, three 10-minute activities with clips of testimony, and a closing self-reflection question.