

Middle School Lesson

“They Don’t Know Me”: Exposing the Myths and Establishing the Facts about Immigration

Rationale

This lesson helps students to differentiate the myths from the facts about immigrants and immigration. Students participate in a quiz and analyze a political cartoon in order to better understand how stereotypes and scapegoating are used to marginalize immigrants. They then hear immigrant testimonials, view a video clip and investigate scenarios in order to increase their empathy and develop their skills as allies to targeted individuals and communities.

Objectives

- Students will distinguish myths from facts regarding immigrants and immigration.
- Students will learn how stereotyping and scapegoating marginalizes groups.
- Students will increase their understanding of the impact of anti-immigrant bias.
- Students will identify and practice strategies for being an ally to targeted individuals and groups.

Age Range

Grades 6–8

Time

2 hours or 3 class periods

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Immigration Quiz](#) (one per student)
- [Bloody Glow-Worms](#) (one to project or one per student)
- [Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration](#) (one per student)
- [Immigration Quiz Answer Key and Myths and Facts Sources](#) (for teacher)
- [Voices of Immigrants](#) (one copy or one per student)
- [Standing Up to Anti-Immigrant Bias Scenarios](#) (for teacher)
- [Being an Ally Worksheet](#) (one per small group)

Other Material:

- Chart paper, markers, scissors
- [What Would You Do?](#) video clip
- Computer, LCD projector, Internet access

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Set up computer/projector/screen (see Part I #2 and Part II #3).
- Decide which *Voices of Immigrants* option to use and prepare as indicated (see Part II #1).
- Cut apart *Standing Up to Anti-Immigrant Bias Scenarios* into individual strips (see Part III #3).

Key Words

9-11
 Ally
 Barrier
 Bias
 Border
 Day laborer
 Discrimination
 Immigrant
 Immigration
 Muslim
 Myth
 Native
 Prejudice
 Refugee
 Scapegoat
 Sikh
 Stereotype
 Terrorism
 Undocumented
 Unemployment
 Wages

Techniques and Skills

analyzing political cartoons, brainstorming, case study, cooperative group work, critical thinking, forming opinions, large and small group discussion, media literacy, reading skills, social action, substantiating factual information, writing skills

Procedures

Part I: Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration (45 minutes)

1. Tell students that they will be exploring the topic of immigration and that, as an introduction to the topic, you'd like them to take a brief true/false quiz. Explain that the purpose is to find out what the class as a whole believes rather than what each individual knows, so they will not need to write their names on the quiz. Distribute the [Immigration Quiz](#) to each student and allow 5–10 minutes for students to work silently. When students are finished, collect the quizzes.

OPTIONAL: Conduct the quiz by asking students to stand along an imaginary continuum for each question. Designate one side of the room as “definitely true,” the other as “definitely false” and the space between as “unsure” but leaning in one direction or another. Read each statement aloud and ask students to stand in the place that reflects their belief. If time allows, ask for volunteers to share why they believe each statement is true or false.

2. Project or distribute the [Bloody Glow-Worms](#) handout to each student. Have a volunteer read the caption aloud and clarify any vocabulary with which students are unfamiliar. Engage students in a discussion using some of the following questions:
 - How do the insects at the front table feel about the glow-worms? Why do they feel this way?
 - What accusations do they make of the glow-worms? Do you think these claims are true?
 - How does this cartoon relate to immigration?
 - What problems do immigrants sometimes get blamed for in our society? What myths or stereotypes are sometimes spread about this population? (**Optional:** List the myths that students come up with on a sheet of chart paper.)
 - What do you think the artist is trying to say through this cartoon?
3. Tell students that the quiz they took earlier contains some myths about immigrants—ideas that many people in society believe are true, but that are actually flawed or just plain wrong. Tell students that they will revisit the quiz to set apart the myths from the facts about immigrants and immigration.
4. Divide the class into small groups of 3–4 students and distribute the [Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration](#) handout to each student. Randomly divide the quizzes completed earlier among each group. Instruct groups to collaboratively mark the quizzes by reading through the *Myths and Facts* handout and searching for the correct answers. Allow about 20 minutes for groups to work.

Refer to the [Immigration Quiz Answer Key](#) as needed.

OPTIONAL: If time is limited or the reading is challenging for students, cut the *Myths and Facts* handout into sections and assign each group to read just one or two of the myths.

5. Reconvene the class and discuss some of the following questions:
 - What surprised you about what you learned from the handout?
 - How did students do overall on the quizzes you marked? Did you find that most students were aware of the facts or did they believe some myths? Which myths in particular?
 - What is a stereotype (*an oversimplified idea about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences*)? How do you think myths or stereotypes about immigrants take hold in our society? Why do people buy into them?
 - What is a scapegoat (*an innocent person or group that is blamed for the general problems of society*)? How and why are immigrants scapegoated in our society?

Part II: Exploring the Impact of Anti-Immigrant Stereotypes (45 minutes)

1. Tell students that you would like them to think about how the myths and stereotypes they just read about can develop into negative behavior, and how this behavior might affect immigrants and all people. Proceed with one of the following options:
 - Divide the class into small groups of 3–5 students. Cut apart the handout, [Voices of Immigrants](#), and give each group several quotes to examine. Instruct groups to discuss how each quote made them feel, and to write down examples of myths, stereotypes and/or scapegoating that are reflected in the immigrants’ experiences.
 - Cut apart the handout, [Voices of Immigrants](#), so that there is one quote on each strip. Ask for volunteers to read aloud each quote one at a time, pausing in between for students to reflect on what they have heard.
 - Provide each student with a copy of the [Voices of Immigrants](#) handout and have them read all of the quotes. Instruct students to select one quote that they are particularly drawn to and to do some free writing in response to the quote. Have a few volunteers read their reflections aloud to the class.
2. After exploring the [Voices of Immigrants](#) quotes, discuss some of the following questions:
 - How do myths and stereotypes shape the way that people treat immigrants?
 - How does this behavior affect immigrants? How does it affect you?
 - Do the experiences described in the quotes reflect what you see and hear in our school or neighborhood? If so, describe what you have noticed.
 - Why do you think certain groups are singled out for negative treatment in our society?
 - What would you do if you heard or observed anti-immigrant remarks or behavior?
3. Tell students that you’d like them to watch a video that follows on the last question—“What would you do?” Explain that in this clip, hidden cameras capture how ordinary people react to prejudice and discrimination against immigrants. Make sure students understand that the immigrants in the video and those who treat them badly are all actors. Tell students that, as they watch, you’d like them to think about what they would do if a similar situation occurred in their school or community. Play [What Would You Do?](#) and discuss some of the following questions after students have viewed the video.
 - Describe the different forms of bias you observed (e.g., demanding that the day laborers speak English; demanding that they leave/take their business elsewhere; ignoring them or acting indifferently; laughing along with the mean comments; making threatening remarks; etc.).
 - What are some of the stereotypes and prejudices that motivated the biased behavior (e.g., immigrants won’t learn English; they’re invading/overflowing our country; they’re different from Americans; they don’t fit into American culture/society; etc.)?
 - How did Mario, the actual day laborer, react to what he observed and how did this make you feel?
 - How did some customers take a stand against the bias (e.g., they challenged biased assumptions; demanded polite behavior; asserted values such as respect for others; showed kindness to the immigrants by ordering/paying for them; threatened to leave/not give future business to the deli; shared their personal background/experiences to lend support; etc.)?
 - What would you do if you observed your peers behaving in a similarly prejudiced or mean way to immigrants in our school or community?
4. What can you do to make sure you never stereotype or scapegoat immigrants or any group of people?

Part III: Being an Ally to Targeted Communities (30 minutes)

1. Write the word, ALLY, on the board or a sheet of chart paper and ask students what it means. Record their responses and make sure that the following basic definition is conveyed:

An ally is someone who speaks out on behalf of someone else or takes actions that are supportive of someone else.

Comment to students that it can sometimes be scary to stand up for others. Ask them what some of the challenges are of being an ally (e.g., peer pressure, fear of being targeted, not wanting to be the only one, not knowing what to say, etc.). List their responses under the definition of ally.

2. Suggest that it takes reflection and practice to be an ally; that we need to think about and even rehearse the words we might use in a difficult situation so that we feel prepared in the moment. Tell students that they will be identifying and practicing strategies for being an ally in response to some made-up scenarios in which immigrants are treated with disrespect.
3. Divide the class into small groups of 3–4 students and have each group select a recorder and a reporter. Provide each group with one scenario from [Standing Up to Anti-Immigrant Bias](#) and the [Being an Ally Worksheet](#). Instruct groups to read and discuss their scenario, and to fill in the worksheet with their thoughts and ideas. Allow about 15 minutes for groups to work.
4. Reconvene the class and have the reporters share highlights from their small group discussions as time allows. Engage the class in a conversation using some of the following questions:
 - What strategies for being an ally did you discuss or hear that never occurred to you before?
 - What strategies did you discuss or hear that you can actually imagine yourself using?
 - Were there strategies that seemed unsafe or uncomfortable to you? Explain.
 - Have you acted as an ally to someone in the past? What happened and how did it feel to stand up against bias or cruelty?
 - What can you do to prepare yourself to act as an ally in the future?

NOTE: Make sure to acknowledge that there are situations in which it may not be safe to stand up to others. Point out that confronting people is only one way to be an ally, and that it is equally helpful to show support in other ways, such as getting assistance from adults, not laughing at biased jokes and showing friendship to the targets of bias and bullying.

Extension Activities

- ➡ Show students political cartoons that depict anti-immigrant sentiment throughout U.S. history. Discuss how such prejudice has been aimed at many immigrant groups who were newcomers to the U.S. Compare historical examples of prejudice to some of the anti-immigrant attitudes that exist today, and discuss strategies for responding to and reducing such bias.
- ➡ Have students collect newspaper and Internet articles that reflect current attitudes about immigrants and immigration reform. Discuss the articles in class and help students to identify changes they would like to see in this country regarding the treatment of immigrants. Work with students to identify strategies for achieving these changes (e.g., letter writing, participating in marches/protests, etc.) and help them to follow through on one or more of these change strategies.

Immigration Quiz

Directions: Read the following statements and indicate whether you think each is true or false by placing a T for true or an F for false on the line before each statement.

- _____ 1. There are more immigrants living in the U.S. today than ever before.
- _____ 2. The number of undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S. has been increasing over the past ten years.
- _____ 3. Immigrants are less likely than native born U.S. citizens to commit crimes and spend time in jail.
- _____ 4. Immigrants are more likely to start their own businesses than people born in the U.S.
- _____ 5. Immigrants don't pay taxes.
- _____ 6. Undocumented immigrants are able to get most federal benefits like social security and food stamps.
- _____ 7. More women immigrate to the U.S. because they want to have babies to ensure they become citizens.
- _____ 8. Mexico has a higher vaccination rate than the United States.
- _____ 9. Many undocumented immigrants in the U.S. entered the country with lawful documentation and become undocumented because they overstayed their visas.
- _____ 10. Border walls have been proven to greatly reduce illegal immigration.

Bloody Glow-Worms...



“Bloody glow-worms... Coming over here... Hanging out in our dingy bars... Wantonly luminescing... Enticing our youth... Attracting our women... Eating them all...”

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Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration

Myth #1: Immigrants are overrunning our country, and most are here illegally.

The Facts: It is true that there are more immigrants living in the U.S. than ever before. However, the percentage of immigrants in the overall population is not much different than many other times throughout our history. Today immigrants make up approximately 13.5% of the total U.S. population. From 1900 to 1930, immigrants made up between 12% and 15% of the population, and similar spikes occurred in the 1850s and 1880s. During those periods immigrants successfully became part of U.S. society, helping to build the thriving and diverse country we have now, and there is no reason to believe today's immigrants will be any different.

More than sixty percent of immigrants in the United States today have lived here for at least 15 years, and the large majority (76%) of immigrants have lawful status. Of the approximately 43.7 million immigrants in the U.S. in 2016, 20.2 million (approximately 44.7 percent) were naturalized citizens. Together, lawful permanent residents (sometimes referred to as green card holders), people in the United States on temporary visas including student and work visas, refugees and people seeking asylum, and undocumented immigrants made up the remaining 55.3 percent of immigrants.

In 2016, there were 10.7 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., or less than 3.5 percent of the nation's population. This represents a significant decrease (13%) from the 12.2 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. in 2007, and is the lowest total since 2004.

Myth #2: Immigrants bring crime and violence to our cities and towns.

The Facts: Recently, public figures have claimed that immigrants are “killers” and “rapists,” bringing crime to the U.S. Study after study has shown, however, that immigrants—regardless of where they are from, what immigration status they hold, and how much education they have completed—are less likely than native-born citizens to commit crimes or become incarcerated. According to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, while the overall percentage of immigrants and the number of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. both increased sharply between 1990 and 2010, the violent crime rate in the U.S. during that time plummeted 45 percent and the property crime rate dropped by 42 percent. Studies have consistently found that immigrants are less likely to be incarcerated than native-born Americans and that there is a negative correlation between levels of immigration and crime rates. Other studies have in fact found that crime rates are lowest in states with the highest immigration growth rates, and that states with larger shares of undocumented immigrants tend to have lower crime rates than states with smaller shares.

Myth #3: Immigrants hurt our country financially by taking jobs and services without paying taxes.

The Facts: Though some people claim that immigrants are taking job opportunities away from people born in the U.S., immigrants actually help to create new jobs. In addition to buying U.S. and local products, which helps create jobs, immigrants often start their own businesses. In fact, immigrants are twice as likely to start businesses as citizens born in the U.S., and companies owned by immigrants are more likely to hire employees than companies owned by native-born citizens. States with large numbers of immigrants report lower unemployment rates for everyone.

Immigrants collectively pay between \$90 and \$140 billion each year in taxes, and a recent study found that undocumented immigrants alone pay approximately \$11.64 billion in taxes each year. Moreover, undocumented immigrants nationwide pay an estimated 8 percent of their income in state and local taxes (their effective state and local tax rate), which is higher than the effective tax rate of the top 1 percent of all taxpayers in the U.S.

Everyone pays sales taxes on goods they purchase and property taxes on the homes they buy or rent, and more than half of all undocumented immigrant households file income tax returns using Individual Tax Identification Numbers.

Myth #4: Immigrants are coming to the U.S. to obtain welfare and other benefits.

The Facts: Most immigrants who come to this country work hard to take care of their families and themselves. Many studies have shown that on average immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits, meaning the taxes they pay more than cover the cost of things like public education and healthcare.

With very few exceptions (such as access to medical care for victims of human trafficking), undocumented immigrants are not eligible for federal public benefits such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare and food stamps. In addition, most immigrants with lawful status are not entitled to these benefits until they have been in the country for five years or longer. This means that Social Security is often being deducted from immigrants' paychecks but they cannot access those benefits. According to a 2018 study by the CATO Institute, eligible immigrants use 27% fewer benefits relative to U.S. natives of similar incomes and ages.

Myth #5: Immigrants are coming to the U.S. with the express purpose of having babies here.

The Facts: The Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution says that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the state wherein they reside." People commonly refer to this right as "birthright citizenship." Some claim that undocumented immigrants come to the U.S. to take advantage of this right. Research consistently shows, however, that the vast majority of immigrants (both with lawful status and those who are undocumented) come to the U.S. for economic opportunity or to flee violence or poverty in their birth countries. Immigration trends—both over the last few decades and throughout history—show that immigration increases when the U.S. economy is booming and it decreases when the U.S. economy is doing less well, supporting the findings that people come for economic opportunity.

If people were coming to the U.S. with the express purpose of having children here, we would expect to see at least the same number of women as men. There are many more young immigrant men coming to the U.S., however, than young women.

Under U.S. law, U.S. citizens cannot petition for a green card for a foreign parent until they turn 21. In the meantime, the parent would have to live as an undocumented immigrant, often in very difficult conditions. When asked why they come to the U.S., undocumented immigrants consistently cite other reasons for migrating, not the desire to have a baby here.

Myth #6: Immigrants are bringing diseases into the U.S.

The Facts: Although people have claimed that undocumented immigrants have brought diseases to the U.S., including measles, hepatitis C, HIV, tuberculosis, and even Ebola, the allegations are not supported. There is no evidence that immigrants have been the source of any modern outbreaks in the U.S. According to the World Health Organization, 113 countries, including many countries in Latin America, have higher vaccination rates for 1-year-olds than the U.S. Mexico, for example, has a 99 percent vaccination rate for measles while Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador have around a 93 percent vaccination rate. The vaccination rate in the U.S., by comparison, is approximately 92 percent. The vast majority of immigrants arriving in the U.S. have been screened for health issues.

Myth #7: Terrorists are infiltrating the U.S. by coming across the border with Mexico.

The Facts: There is no credible evidence that terrorists are entering the U.S. through the border with Mexico. In 2014, the Department of Homeland Security noted that "the suggestion that individuals that have ties to ISIL have been apprehended at the southwest border is categorically false, and not supported by any credible intelligence or facts on the ground." And, according to a more recent report released by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism in 2017, "Counterterrorism cooperation between the Mexican and U.S. governments remained strong. There are no known international terrorist organizations operating in Mexico, no evidence that any terrorist group has targeted U.S. citizens in Mexican territory, and no credible information that any member of a terrorist group has traveled through Mexico to gain access to the United States." In fact, the vast majority of U.S. residents linked to terror since 2002 are U.S. citizens.

Myth #8: All undocumented immigrants sneak across the Mexican border.

The Facts: Although many people commonly think of undocumented immigrants as people who have snuck across the Mexican border, current estimates suggest that somewhere between one third and one half of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. have overstayed their visitor, student or work visas. That means that they entered the U.S. with lawful documentation and only later became undocumented.

Myth #9: We can stop undocumented immigrants coming in the U.S. by building a wall along the border with Mexico.

The Facts: A wall or a fence along the entire border with Mexico would be impractical and very likely ineffective. The border between the U.S. and Mexico is almost 2,000 miles long. It spans difficult terrain, including deserts and mountains. Rivers flow along two thirds of the border. Much of the area is private property, which the government would have to buy from the owners to build a fence or wall, and many do not want to sell the land. The logistics alone make building a wall very difficult, if not impossible.

From the Great Wall of China to the Berlin Wall, history shows us that people find ways to cross walls. Experts predict that a wall along the entire length of the border would lead coyotes—human smugglers who charge migrants high rates to cross the border—to dig tunnels and create breaches. This would increase smuggling prices, making the process simply more lucrative for those exploiting migrants.

As long as there is poverty, violence and persecution in other parts of the world, people will continue to come to the U.S. to seek a better life, no matter how big a wall we build. The U.S. prides itself on being a “nation of immigrants,” and on the values of fairness and equality. It is possible to create a process for addressing immigration that treats immigrants with dignity and respect instead of as criminals.

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Immigration Quiz Answer Key

1. There are more immigrants living in the U.S. today than ever before.
True and False; see Myth #1
2. The number of undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S. has been increasing over the past ten years.
False; see Myth #1
3. Immigrants are less likely than native born U.S. citizens to commit crimes and spend time in jail.
True; see Myth #2
4. Immigrants are more likely to start their own businesses than people born in the U.S.
True; see Myth #3
5. Immigrants don't pay taxes.
False; see Myth #3 and #4
6. Undocumented immigrants are able to get most federal benefits like social security and food stamps.
False, see Myth #4
7. More women immigrate to the U.S. because they want to have babies to ensure they become citizens.
False; see Myth #5
8. Mexico has a higher vaccination rate than the United States.
True; see Myth #6
9. Many undocumented immigrants in the U.S. entered the country with lawful documentation and become undocumented because they overstayed their visas.
True; see Myth #8
10. Border walls have been proven to greatly reduce illegal immigration.
False; see Myth #9

Voices of Immigrants

“I remember going to school in the U.S. at six or seven—I would cry every day when I first came and always wanted to go back home. I had none of my friends here, and I didn’t understand the language. People also treated me differently because I dressed and acted different and I didn’t speak English.” —Romina, Uzbekistan

“Elementary and middle school were very rough years. I didn’t understand English well. Kids would mess with me. Punch me. They’d tell me to curse at teachers, and I would do it without understanding. Then the school would call my dad, so I’d be punished at school and at home. I got suspended a lot during those years because students would trick me into getting in trouble, and I didn’t know how to defend myself in English.” —Inayet, Afghanistan

“High school was an extremely difficult stage for all of us [brothers]. I remember how hard it was to eat alone in the cafeteria full of your peers. I pretended to read books as I ate, pretended to be okay, and I was horrible at pretending. Each one of my brothers has a story but we rarely told our parents how hard it was for us. We knew our parents did not have it easy either.” —Jeff, Philippines

“This is a great country, don’t get me wrong. But when I started school, I was received with such negativity. I had people walk up to me and say things like, ‘You dumba** of an African, why don’t you go back to where you came from?’ I was shocked, but I was thinking, they don’t know anything about me.” —Neema, Kenya

“One time I was playing in the park, playing basketball by myself, the kids they used to throw stones at me. Brothers, they wouldn’t let me play in the park. And they used to curse at me and tell me, ‘Go back to your country.’ I think what made those people treat me the way they treated me was because they don’t know me, they don’t know anything about my culture.” —Mohammed, Guinea, West Africa

“It was a very slow and awkward process of being ‘Americanized.’ After the first year I became fluent in English, gained the ability to hide most of my accent, shed the FOB [fresh off the boat] look, and eventually became less of a target for scrutiny. My appearance was one of my biggest paranoias. I received a major beating the first week of school by two boys in Metallica t-shirts. They did not like ‘Kmart-wearing Asians.’ To this day I refuse to shop there for clothes.” —Jeff, Philippines

“Terms like discrimination, prejudice, stereotype, I never heard those terms in my country. I learned them here. I remember someone saying that Dominicans in Washington Heights, they are all drug addicts.” —Luincys, Dominican Republic

“If a Muslim is a terrorist, it doesn’t mean that we all are terrorists. That’s totally wrong. That is not—you don’t know me. You don’t know me. If you want, if you want to know me, you got to come up to me and ask me.” —Fatima, Tanzania

“I remember in elementary school, this girl that I met said, ‘Go back where you came from.’ People don’t understand that you would have to go back to a war zone or a refugee camp. Those comments are emotionally painful. I was young and didn’t know how to explain that my country was full of bombing and murders, and occupation by the Soviets. We were the lucky ones to come to the U.S., and we expected Americans to know why we came, but they didn’t know.” —Inayet, Afghanistan

“I have been rejected for different reasons, the worst one being from ignorance about who I am by teachers and classmates. Once I was brave enough to complain to the head of my school. One of my teachers was spreading stereotypes about Moslems and how they shouldn’t come to the U.S. because they cause trouble and don’t fit in. The principal seemed surprised and said he’d talk with the teacher. I felt good being able to speak up for myself.” —Roya, Iran

“I remember when my mother used to tell me, ‘In the U.S. you can find a job on every corner. It’s the only place where everybody is equal; it’s the promised land, mijito.’ Mom, I love you, but that was the biggest lie anybody ever told me. I have

been here four years, and I still don't see the promised land...Nobody tells you about the hard work of an immigrant, and people making fun of your English. You can never get respect if you come from another country. For a person who has graduated from university, it's hard to think you will be working at a restaurant in New York City." —Waiter, Columbia

"It's not easy to talk to the customers. I feel sad when they have a bad attitude talking to me. I am like a slave in their eyes; they think my job is for low level and poor people...I'm here illegally, so there is little chance for me to travel back and see my parents. Now is the time for me to save money and work hard. I feel sorry that I came here to struggle. I don't know what I will do next." —Manicurist, China

Quotes from Romina, Inayet, Jeff and Roya are from Judith M. Blohm and Terri Lapinsky, *Kids Like Me: Voices of the Immigrant Experience* (Boston: Intercultural Press, 2006).

Quotes from the Columbian waiter and Chinese manicurist are from Students of Three New York International High Schools, *Forty-Cent Tip: Stories of New York Immigrant Workers* (New York: Next Generation Press, 2006).

Quotes from Neema, Mohammed, Luincys and Fatima are from *Teen Immigrants: Five American Stories*, PBS In the Mix at www.pbs.org/inthemix/shows/show_teen_immigrants5.html.

Standing Up to Anti-Immigrant Bias Scenarios

1. Jaspreet enrolled at your school after his family moved to the U.S. from India earlier this year. Though Jaspreet's family is Sikh, he is often mistaken for Muslim because he is from South Asia and wears a turban. On the way home from school one day, you observe a group of kids from school throw sticks at him and shout remarks like, "Is your family in ISIS?" and "Go back to Syria."
2. Different groups at your school claim certain spots during lunch. For example, the Latina/o students hang out at the picnic tables, the white students by the basketball court and the African-American students on the grass. One day a student from El Salvador sits with an African-American friend on the grass. Several other students demand that she leave the grassy area, telling her to "Go back to Mexico" and that she's not welcome in this country.
3. Ivo is a Bosnian immigrant who recently moved to the U.S. and knows only a few words of English. You notice that every day at lunch some of the kids in your class invent ways to get Ivo in trouble, and then laugh when he is unable to defend himself. You watch one day as one of your classmates sneaks a cell phone from a girl's bag and plants it in Ivo's backpack. When the girl starts searching for her phone, the other kids point at Ivo and tell the teacher on him. Ivo stares helplessly at the teacher and the other kids shout things like, "Cat got your tongue?" and "We speak English in this country."
4. When the biology teacher tells the class to find a lab partner, the kids quickly pair up and Chun Hei is left sitting alone. When the teacher asks for a volunteer to work with Chun Hei, no one offers. The teacher finally assigns Michele to work with Chun Hei. Michele reluctantly walks over to Chun Hei's station and sits as far away from her as possible. You hear Michele whisper to some neighboring students that Koreans eat dog and it smells like Chun Hei has a dead one in her lunchbag.
5. Jose is one of several students who have been selected as finalists in an essay contest at your school. The winner will receive \$1,000 toward his or her college fund. A couple of classmates tell you that they don't think Jose should be allowed to win, and ask you to go with them to complain to the principal. They tell you that Jose and his family are "illegals" and shouldn't be entitled to scholarship money from a public school. "They'll probably be sent back to their country at some point," says one, "and then they'll have our money instead of a real American."
6. A large number of Liberian refugees have settled in your community over the past few years as the result of a long civil war in that country. Some of the families in your school have complained that the Liberian students are wild, that they steal and are interfering with the education of American students. After several fights break out between Liberian and U.S.-born students, a petition circulates demanding that the school stop taking in Liberian refugees. Some classmates approach you and ask you to sign the petition.

Being an Ally Worksheet

Directions: After reading your *Standing Up to Anti-Bias Immigrant* scenario, discuss the questions below with your group members and record the group's thoughts and ideas.

1. Describe the problem behavior(s).

2. What stereotypes, biases or other beliefs motivated the problem behavior(s)?

3. What actions could you take in the moment to be an ally?

4. What specific words could you use in the moment to be an ally?

5. What actions could you take following the incident to be an ally?
