

"This American Life" Radio Archive

Born out of a car trip listening to "This American Life" on the radio, the idea to use these radio links arose from a desire to allow you to hear and feel – not just read – what people experience with issues of race, ethnicity, and gender. For each chapter, you will find one or more links to the radio shows, along with discussion questions created by Professor Timothy Ulrich of Seattle Pacific University.

"This American Life" is a popular radio show with an unusual format. Each week, the hosts pick a theme and interview people who have some relation to that theme, with the end result of a powerful combination of pathos, humor, and overall learning.

To hear the links, you must download RealPlayer, a multimedia player (many computers will have it already). If your computer does not have RealPlayer installed, please go to www.real.com. Then press "Ctrl" while clicking on the blue and black rectangular icon beside the episode to hear the show. If you are interested in visiting the site or finding more episodes, please go to www.thislife.org.

We hope you enjoy this experience and find it an effective learning tool for putting the issues discussed in *Diversity and Society* into personal perspective.

Chapter 1- Diversity in the United States: Questions and Concepts

[Episode 196 – "Rashomon"](#) 

In each act of this episode, you'll hear someone sharing their perspective about an issue... quite possibly a perspective that is radically different from the one that you currently hold. Reflect on the multitude of perspectives that exist in our social world. How do race, ethnicity, gender, and class all contribute to the formation of (sometimes) radically different world views?

[Episode 138 – "The Real Thing" - Act 3 – 18:30 – 30:00](#) 

In this clip, you'll hear a discussion about what it means to be "real." Specifically, the question of what is a "real Black" is raised. How does the idea of "the Social Construction of Racial Identity" apply to this discussion? Think about your own racial identity. In what way might elements of your racial identity be a social construction?

[Episode 67 – "Your Dream, My Nightmare" - Act 2 – 21:15 – 34:30](#) 

This clip details an inter-racial couple's tour of a southern plantation home. How do the husband and wife see things differently while on their tour? A man in a music store gives something to the couple's child. Is this action friendly or unfriendly? Why can there be multiple interpretations? Reflect on some of the reasons why a single act or event may be interpreted in different ways because of race, ethnicity, gender or class.

Chapter 2- Assimilation and Pluralism


[Episode 91 – "Escape the Box" – Prologue and Act 1 – 0 – 17:00](#) 

Sylvia is a young woman torn between two cultures. She wants to be "American," yet at the same time, her immigrant parents want her to be "traditional." Is Sylvia's story a sign of positive changes (assimilation) or a story of negative changes (loss of ethnic culture)? Why might there be multiple responses to this question? Reflect on Sylvia's continuing refrain that she doesn't want to be a "failure." What does "failure" mean to her?

[Episode 128 – "Four Corners" - Act 4 – 47:00 – 59:00](#) 

In "How to Become an American," Achy Obejas reads a selection from her book *We Came All the Way from Cuba So You Could Dress Like This?* This is a piece of short fiction that raises questions about fitting in and a clash of cultures. What would the theories of assimilation described in the text say about the young man's progress in assimilating?

Chapter 3- The Development of Dominant-Minority Group Relations in Pre-Industrial America: The Origins of Slavery

[Episode 120 – "Be Careful Who You Pretend to Be" - Act 1 – 5:00 – 19:00; Act 3 – 32:00 - end](#) 

In these two clips, you hear two different perspectives about the experience of slavery. In the first, a man talks about his job recreating the slave experience for people at the Conner Prairie Living History Museum. In the clip from Act 3, you hear about people going through a recreation at the museum in which they pretend to be runaway slaves. Do these experiences serve a purpose? What do these two stories tell you about the legacy of slavery today?

[Episode 68 – "Lincoln's Second Inaugural" – Prologue and Act 1 - 0 – 18:40](#) 

Abraham Lincoln referred to slavery as the original sin of America. In this clip, the host asks how America, today, is coping with this "original sin." What do the stories out of Lincoln Park High School tell us about continuing ideas about both slavery and modern day race relations? How does the story about the confederate flag over the South Carolina Statehouse display very different ideas about race and different interpretations of history?

Chapter 4- Industrialization and Dominant-Minority Relations: From Slavery to Segregation and the Coming of Postindustrial Society

[Episode 37 – "The Job that Takes Over Your Life" - Act 3 – 30:00 – 50:00](#) 

During World War II, the US Navy first accepted Blacks. Black men who volunteered were often put into the least desirable conditions. The story of the Port Chicago 50 is detailed in this clip. After listening to this story, use the text to explain how the Port Chicago incident reflected other forms of employment segregation. What were the rationales for this kind of treatment?

[Episode 173 – "Three Kinds of Deception" - Act 2 – 27:15 – 43:45](#) 

In this clip, Lawrence Otis Graham reads from his book, *Member of the Club*. An African-American Harvard graduate with a law practice, Graham takes a job as a busboy at a country-club that doesn't

allow Blacks to join. Graham's description of his experience shows that segregation continues in America today. Why is this segregation important? How does it affect people's lives?

Chapter 5- African Americans: From Segregation to Modern Institutional Discrimination and Modern Racism

[Episode 84 – "Harold"](#)

This episode focuses on the first Black mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington. How was Washington's campaign affected by racism and stereotyping? What experiences of Mayor Washington were specific to his race? The second act asks talks about the lack of Black mayors in the United States. When a Black serves in a position such as mayor, what does that do to and for the black community?

[Episode 105 – "Take a Negro Home"](#)

Two stories in this episode discuss experiences of African Americans assimilation. In the first story, the subject is interracial marriage. What role did race play in the dissolution of the marriage discussed here? In the second story, an African American student from one of the poorest counties in the country works his way into an Ivy League school. What qualities help him to get into the school? Which of these qualities "make him an outcast in the Ivy League?" What do these stories, as well as the story from the prologue, say about the level of assimilation achieved by African Americans? What challenges for African Americans and for the United States do these stories highlight?

[Episode 142 – Barbara](#)

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Chapter 6- Native Americans: From Conquest to Tribal Survival in a Postindustrial Society

[Episode 219 – "High Speed Chase" – Act 1 and 2 – 11:00 – end](#)

"War whoops and dancing" by White students at a high school basketball game escalated to something much larger. How do the events that transpired demonstrate a pattern of injustice? Why is it that neither side in this episode feels that justice was served? In Act 2, residents of the town excused the behavior of the White boys. What rationales were used to excuse this behavior? Why did the Native Americans believe that this was more than an isolated incident?

[Episode 107 – Trail of Tears](#)

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[Episode 113 – Windfall – Act 1 – 3:40 – 26:00](#) 

The impact of a casino on one Native American group in Minnesota is examined in this clip. What impact did the money from the casino have on this band? How is the money used and how does this differ from other groups? Why might changes be coming for this group? How does the compact with the state, under which the casino operates, mirror some of the historical treaties that Native Americans have had with the United States government?

Chapter 7- Hispanic Americans: Colonization, Immigration, and Ethnic Enclaves

[Episode 179 – "Cicero"](#) 

Cicero is a suburb of Chicago that, four decades ago, was considered to be one of the most racist and corrupt suburbs in America. The town was historically an all-white suburb. In the 1970s, Hispanics began to migrate to town and it is now more than three-quarter Hispanic. The political power of the town is still in the hands of Whites. How does the race issue play out in Cicero politics on a regular basis?

[Episode 177 – "American Limbo" - Act 3 – 46:00 – end](#) 

This clip is a follow-up of Sylvia, the subject of the "Escape the Box" episode from Chapter 2. Sylvia is a Mexican American young woman who is torn between her traditional parents and being "American." This follow-up looks at Sylvia's life three years later. How have things changed for Sylvia? How have her dreams changed? What has led her to question some of her ideas about her ethnicity?

[Episode 124 – "Welcome to America" - Act 2 – 37:00 – end](#) 

Juan Zaldivar is an American who was born in Cuba. In this clip, you'll hear about his attempt to convince his father, that immigrating to America was actually a good choice. Why is his father still unconvinced? What does the family remember about Cuba? What is life like for the family members that remained in Cuba? What do the remembrances of the family members who did immigrate say about life in the United States?

Chapter 8- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders: A "Model Minority"?

[Episode 150 – "Kids as Adults" - Act 2 – 22:00 – 34:30](#) 

Anh Tuan Wong, at the age of 12, escaped Vietnam by boat. What did his experience of fleeing look like? Why did he want to come to the United States? Why does Wong say that he probably would not make the same decisions today?

Chapter 9- White Ethnic Groups: Assimilation and Identity – The Twilight of Ethnicity?

[Episode 138 – "The Real Thing" - Act 3 - 29:45 – 45:30](#) 

In this clip, the portrayal of Southerners in movies is examined. The Southern "drawl" or accent is regularly butchered, according to Mark Schone. Why is it that this happens, according to Schone? How can it occur regularly without anyone putting an end to it?

[Episode 124 – "Welcome to America" - Act 1 – 4:30 – 26:00](#) 

New York City has begun to hire Austrians to teach science courses in the public school. What kind of cultural gap exists between Austrian teachers and their American students? What kind of cultural gap exists between Austrian teachers and American teachers?

[Episode 65 – "Who's Canadian"](#) 

This episode helps to address the question of what is meant by "White-ethnic." Are Canadian Americans "White-ethnics?" What does this phrase mean? Is there a distinctive ethnic culture for Canadians?

Chapter 10- Dominant-Minority Relations in Cross-National Perspective

[Episode 165 – "Americans in Paris" - Act 3 – 40:30 – end](#) 

In the 1940s, Paris was viewed as a very racially tolerant place. In this clip, the race question in Paris today is examined. Is there a difference between how Black Americans and native Blacks or Blacks from other countries are treated in Paris? Why does this differential treatment exist? Is Paris racially tolerant?

[Episode 238 – "Lost in Translation" - Act 2 – 19:00 – 39:00](#) 

Palestinians and Israelis speak different languages. Nasser Laham translates Israeli news reports into Arabic. Often his show is the only one to report certain news stories to Palestinians. Why is it that Palestinians do not hear many of these stories except through Laham? What impact does Laham's show have on the relationship between these two groups?

[Episode 72 – "Trek"](#) 

This episode follows two Americans, one White and one Black, who tour through South Africa. Ira Glass claims that South Africa serves as one of the best mirrors for American society. When the two Americans talk about their experiences, how is it that each has a very different impression of race relations in South Africa? What do the Americans observe about race relations during their tour?

[Episode 201 – "Them" - Act 3 - 32:00 – end](#) 

This is the story from World War II. A black American sailor washed up on the shore of Newfoundland. The white residents of Newfoundland had never before seen a Black. This story examines the sailor's treatment. How is this man treated in Newfoundland? How is he treated by the US Navy? Why does the host, Ira Glass, claim that things are turned upside down in this story? How was the sailor's life changed by his treatment?

Chapter 11- Minority Groups and U.S. Society: Themes, Patterns, and the Future

[Episode 170 – "Immigration"](#)

In this episode, a 1996 immigration law is profiled. Each of the clips in this episode shows that this law has many unintended consequences. Are these consequences truly unintended? Are there some people benefiting from this law? What does the fact that this law was enacted and is enforced say about the racial climate of the United States? If this law continues, what may be the long term consequences?