Students to write down first impressions (1-3 words) based on the following words: Male, Female, Local, Foreigner, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Young, Old, Ugly, Beautiful, Disabled, Homosexuality, Heterosexuality, Foreign Domestic Worker, Construction Worker, Sex Worker etc. (Educator can quickly read out the list)

Debrief: This activity highlights students’ perceptions/ stereotypes (similar or differing). The following discussion can be based on how their perceptions are influenced by the stories around them.

*\*Optional: Educator may choose to follow up with a discussion on stereotypes if students’ responses reveal many stereotypes: What are stereotypes? Are stereotypes harmful? Why? Why do stereotypes exist?*

**10 min: Video (Section 1):**

Watch video [‘Chimamanda Adichie’s The Danger of a Single Story’](http://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.html) [18:49] (TEDGlobal, Oct 2009) from [00:00 – 07.35]. Students should take notes. Pause at [07.35].

**30 min: Discussion – On Stories and Perceptions**

Based on Section 1 of the video:

* How is your perception influenced by the world around you? (ie. What stories are you told in books, movies, pictures, music, the news, or by friends and family?)
* Chimamanda Adichie speaks of “how impressionable and vulnerable we are in the face of a story, particularly as children”. What stories did you grow up reading/listening to? Could you identify with the characters in these stories? Why? Why not? Did these stories influence your perception of the world?
* Consider how “our lives, our cultures, are composed of many overlapping stories”. What do you think this means?

**15 min: Video (Section 2)**

Continue the video from [07:36 - End]. Students should take notes.

**20 min: Group Discussion**

Students can respond to one of these questions/ quotes from the TED video, in writing or further discussion:

* What role does the media play in perpetuating or challenging stereotypes?
* Discuss the ways family background, religion, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, age, socio-economic status and other group and cultural influences contribute to the development of one’s perceptions.
* “The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.” – Chimamanda Adichie
* “Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign, but stories can also be used to empower and to humanize. Stories can break the dignity of a people, but stories can also repair that broken dignity.” – Chimamanda Adichie
* “It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. There is a word, an Igbo word, that I think about whenever I think about the power structures of the world, and it is “nkali.” It’s a noun that loosely translates to “to be greater than another.” Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of nkali: How they are told, who tells them, when they’re told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.” – Chimamanda Adichie

**20 min: Further Discussion: Case study – Looking at the Context of Singapore**

Educator could use excerpts or key points from Kenneth Paul Tan’s essay ‘Ethnic Representation on Singapore Film and Television’ and/or examples of films/ TV programmes for discussion on stereotypes in the local media.

* Are there any ‘single stories’ in our local media?
* If so, how do these stories entrench harmful societal attitudes and stereotypes about class, race, gender, wealth etc?
* How can we help to reduce harmful stereotypes? How can such ‘single stories’ can be challenged?

OPTICS on a series of images – have students share responses to show that there is no single story - we all have different perceptions, backgrounds, knowledge

What do you think people think about you? Do people think you have a single story?

Connection to Trayvon Martin – what was his single story? What did he think Zimmerman’s story was?

What do you want to set straight about your story? What do people need to know?

How does this connect to our study of world literature?

**Moving Beyond Martin and Zimmerman: Questions for Starting A Constructive Dialogue**

July 24, 2013 | Filed under: [Critical Thinking](http://lanetwork.facinghistory.org/category/critical-thinking/), [In the News](http://lanetwork.facinghistory.org/category/in-the-news/), [Safe Schools](http://lanetwork.facinghistory.org/category/safe-schools/)

At Facing History, we spend a lot of time thinking about the questions, actions, and choices people worldwide made in the aftermath of violent events throughout history – events ranging from the Armenian Genocide to the Holocaust to the American civil rights movement. This exploration of historical events allows us to both investigate the complexity of the events as well as reflect upon connections to ourselves and today with a grounding of historical understanding.

As Facing History staff, we too wrestle with these issues on an on-going basis. This week, a colleague offered some thoughts on how we as a global community might move forward into dialogue after the Zimmerman trial:

*After hearing the verdict earlier this month that Florida neighborhood watch coordinator George Zimmeran was found not guilty in the shooting death of teenager Trayvon Martin, I found myself searching for the right questions to ask in the aftermath of this current-day violence. What I longed for were questions that would help move the dialogue from the simplicity of “blame and shame” and useless labeling to a much more productive place.*

*The evening after the jury announced its verdict, I had a conversation with my two kids. One of the biggest challenges I faced was trying to get my kids to refrain from demonizing or even focusing on Zimmerman. I pushed them to deal with the complexity of the whole situation, while preserving their right to judge his actions. I was marginally successful. The messages out there are too strong even for a parent to overcome at times. I didn’t mind them questioning Zimmerman’s choices and motives. But I did not want them to go along with group thinking without grappling with the complexities of the choices that Zimmerman made and the societal context in which he made them. In the end, we didn’t end up talking much about the case or Zimmerman, but about the larger questions of race in America.*

Here are a handful of the questions we considered:

* How does one resist acting on stereotypical profiles, of any group, but especially when the stereotypes are so strong? Was Zimmerman profiled as well? If so, by whom?
* What does it take to have a shift in one’s thinking about another group of people, especially in the face of long held stereotypes?
* Is there ever any value in labeling? If so when is it helpful?
* Many people say our country has not had an honest dialogue about race. What question should start that dialogue? What would success in the conversation look like?
* There have been some connections made between this incident and the Emmett Till murder. Which connections are relevant? Which are not? Why? How do we avoid facile comparisons or simple parallels while trying to learn from the past? [For more background on the Emmett Till murder, see chapter one of Facing History’s [*Eyes on the Prize Study Guide*](http://www.facinghistory.org/publications/eyes-prize-study-guide)]
* For those who feel justice was not served, what role do they think the law played in this decision? What range of choices do they have? Which choices would move us closer to a just society?
* Is justice ever blind or solely objective? If so, under what conditions?

**What questions are you asking in the aftermath of the Zimmerman verdict? Leave us a comment below.**

To help you prepare for questions and conversations that might come up at home or in classrooms:

* [See Contracting for a Safe Reflective Classroom](http://www.facinghistory.org/paths/contracting-safe-reflective-classroom) for resources on how to create space for nuanced and difficult classroom conversations.
* Review Facing History’s [Learn to Listen/Listen to Learn](http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/strategies/learn-listenlisten-learn-deve) activity, which can be a useful teaching strategy during conversations about difficult topics.
* Check out the DVD [*Race: The Power of an Illusion*](http://www.facinghistory.org/resources/library/race-power-illusion)*,* a powerful film that can help students and adults understand race in a more historical context. The DVD is available through the Facing History lending library.
* Watch the short video clip [*How Stereotypes Affect Us and What We can Do*](http://video.facinghistory.org/services/player/bcpid2188841232001?bckey=AQ~~,AAABYEdBaAk~,1dGnVytVBSwptCMqqmU--VaFE6Ipp0vB&bclid=2188677607001&bctid=2180701538001&utm_content=emily_blackie%40facing.org&utm_source=VerticalResponse&utm_medium=Email&utm_term=)