



## **DESCRIPTION**

This lesson plan uses three short stories by Susan O’Halloran, a noted story artist, workshop presenter, and keynote speaker whose work explores the complex issues of social justice. O’Halloran is the author of four books plus diversity curriculum, CDs, and films. The three stories offered here—“Davy Crockett,” “Us vs. Them,” and “The Dr. King March”—all explore O’Halloran’s experience growing up in Chicago in the 1950s and 1960s when the relationship between blacks and whites in the United States were tense and changing quickly.

After generations of legal and *de facto* separation and oppression, African Americans, often joined by people of other races, worked for equal rights. During that time, the country saw peaceful marches and violent clashes; people were inspired by the courage and vision of leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., while others were angry and fearful at how quickly society seemed to be changing.

O’Halloran offers a unique perspective on this time as a white woman who grew up on the South side of Chicago, one of the most racially segregated cities in the United States. She grew up in a white, working class, Catholic neighborhood that was warm and supportive but that was not open to people of other races, and she became involved in working for racial equality while a teenager, crossing the “color line” to meet and hear the stories of those whom her friends and family had only whispered about or referred to in a negative way.

In these stories, we are not asked to take sides or to vilify white people, but to explore how race has been used in our country to separate people and how an individual can struggle within a complex of racist stereotypes, get educated, and reach across the “color line,” offering a new way to be in a society that is only growing more complex racially.

This lesson plan offers an accessible way to talk about issues related to race and racism, especially when the people we love are the very ones with whom we need to disagree if we are to create a just society.



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Teachers can use these stories in a variety of ways: students could read and/or listen to one story and engage in discussion in 15-20 minutes, student groups could split up the stories and then share their learning with one another in 30-45 minutes, or students could explore all three stories over a period of two or more class periods. These stories can be read and/or listened to in class, or students can read and listen to these stories by going to [www.racebridgesforschools.com](http://www.racebridgesforschools.com) and choosing “A White Girl Looks at Race” under the “Lesson Plans” heading. There they can download the story excerpts in PDF format and listen to the audio excerpts. Make sure students have access to computers that can open PDF and audio files.

**Recommended Method:** Although this will take more time, the best way to complete this lesson plan is to have students read and/or listen to the stories in class and then engage in the lesson plan activities.

**Note:** *While the transcripts of the stories follow the main narrative points and meaning of the stories as they are spoken by the storyteller, there are some differences between the written text below and the spoken versions. Storytelling is a living art and changes from telling to telling. This text is a guide.*

### **PURPOSE**

- To expose students to the experience of a white person conflicted about race and racism.
- To examine how messages about race and difference are spread implicitly and explicitly.
- To give students the opportunity to share and analyze the messages they have received about race and difference.

### **OUTCOMES**

By the end of this lesson, each student will

- Be familiar with the tension around race, racism, and the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s
- Understand the complexity of trying to think differently than one’s family and culture.
- Respond to the issues and themes of the story
- Relate their own experience to the story



## **MATERIALS**

- Teacher Instructions
- Handout #1A: “Davy Crockett” by Susan O’Halloran
- Handout #1B: Discussion Questions for “Davy Crockett”
- Handout #2A: “Us vs. Them” by Susan O’Halloran
- Handout #2B: Discussion Questions for “Us vs. Them”
- Handout #3A: “The Dr. King March” by Susan O’Halloran
- Handout #3B: Discussion Questions for “The Dr. King March”

## **LESSON PLAN OPTIONS**

- **One-Story Option:** Students read and/or listen to one of the stories and respond using the discussion questions, either alone or in groups. Time: 10-45 minutes.
- **Multiple-Story Option in Jigsaw Groups:** Students are divided into groups; each group reads and/or listens to a different story; groups then share their stories and responses with one another. Time: 30-45 minutes.
- **All Stories, All Students Option:** Every student reads and/or listens to each story and has the opportunity to respond to the stories individually and to discuss the stories in small group and/or large class format. Time: One to two class periods.



## TEACHER INSTRUCTIONS

### ONE-STORY OPTION

Choose one story for the class to read and/or listen to and decide whether students will work on the story alone, in pairs, or groups. Pair or group them before reading/listening to the story so that they can begin discussing as soon as they finish listening to and/or reading them. Do not let students choose their own partners; either have them count off into random pairs or groups or place them in pairs or groups you believe will be most productive.

Introduce your students to the real-life story of Susan O'Halloran's that you will use by providing some background of the historical setting and time. Explain that they will have the chance to discuss the story after listening to and/or reading it.

**Today we're going to listen to [and/or read] one of the stories from "A White Girl Looks at Race" by Susan O'Halloran, a white, Irish-Catholic woman who grew up in Chicago during the 1950s and 60s. O'Halloran grew up in Chicago on the white side of the color line during the Civil Rights Movement, which was spreading all over the country. During this time African Americans, often accompanied by people of other races, were struggling against generations of oppression and inequality. This inequality included unfair housing laws and real estate practices that barred African Americans from living in certain neighborhoods, discrimination in hiring practices that went unchallenged, and unequal education due to legally segregated education in the south and *de facto* educational segregation in the north. We now study in schools the Civil Rights movement and how it changed the legal and day-to-day reality for African Americans and has changed the way that race, racism, and race relations work today in the United States.**

**The stories that O'Halloran tells, however, are about what it felt like to live through the Civil Rights movement as a child and teenager. She explores what race and the divide between blacks and whites "felt" like to her growing up in segregated Chicago, with a family and in a neighborhood she loved but disagreed with about race. In all of her stories, O'Halloran reveals how racism and stereotypes are passed on in subtle ways from one generation to another, how confusing and unnatural the distrust and dislike of one race for another feels to a child, and how O'Halloran struggled to be close to her roots—family, neighborhood, and heritage—while resisting the racism that seemed wound around those roots.**



**O’Halloran’s stories gives us the opportunity to learn about a particularly fraught and exciting time in our history from a personal vantage point and to explore our own experiences with differences while learning to love who we are and where we are from even when we have to disagree with our roots. Today, we will listen to [and/or read] the one of O’Halloran’s stories. After the story, you will have the chance to respond to the story in writing [or discussion].**

Pass out Handouts related to the story you have chosen; make sure students get both the story transcript and the discussion questions. Have students listen to and/or read the story. Then allow students time to review the discussion questions on their own. If they will work alone, students can respond to the discussion questions in writing; you can choose to have them pick the questions that most appeal to them or have them respond to all questions.

If they are working together, give students two to three minutes to respond on their own in writing to the questions (they should choose the ones they find most interesting). Then ask students to discuss their answers with their partner or group; allot the time for this based on how long you want to spend on this activity. If there is time, ask a few pairs or groups to share their answers with the class; this can be shortened or expanded depending on the amount of time you have.

### **MULTIPLE-STORY OPTION WITH JIGSAW GROUPS**

Place students in groups of three and assign each group one of the stories from “A White Girl Looks at Race.” Introduce the stories to the group using the introduction above and then have each group listen to and/or read their story (students could have been given the homework assignment of listening to their story the night before). Give each group the relevant handouts of the transcript and discussion question for their story. Allow students two to three minutes to respond on their own in writing to the questions (they should choose the ones they find most interesting). Then ask students to discuss their answers with their group; allot the time for this based on how long you want to spend on this activity.

The group should then summarize the story, their response to the story, and what they, as a group, take away from the story so that each group member can share their experience with a new group. Reconfigure groups so that now there are groups of three that have a student from each of the stories in the group. Have members of the new group share their summary of the story they listened to and/or read, their response, and their “take away” from their group discussion. By the end of the activity, each student should have participated in a “one-story” group and a group with members who have read and discussed different stories.



**ALL STORIES, ALL STUDENTS OPTION**

Follow the instructions for the One-Story Option above, but allow students to listen to and/or read each of the stories. Allow students time for personal reflection and pair sharing or group discussion for each of the stories. After hearing/reading all of the stories, ask groups to share with one another ways in which they have grown or changed in the way they understand differences now that they are teens and how they have had to differentiate themselves from their families and neighborhoods. Then hold a class-wide discussion about the stories and what students today can learn from these stories, addressing topics, such as: What are the dividing lines in this school or town/city? How did you learn about differences in your family, implicitly and explicitly? About what social issues do you and your families disagree?



## LESSON EXTENSION IDEAS

1. Split the class into groups and have them research the following topics and share their research with the class:
  - The history of housing discrimination, especially red-lining and block busting.
  - Racial patterns in housing today in the students' own town or city.
  - The response to Civil Rights marches in various cities, both southern and northern.
  - The racial make-up of the Civil Rights Movement.
  - Race in sports.
2. Watch the brown-eyed/blue-eyed experiment (see resources below) in class and discuss how prejudice and stereotyping is created and learned rather than innate or natural.
3. Buy a copy of the curriculum *Kaleidoscope: Valuing Difference and Creating Inclusion* (listed in the resource list below) and teach diversity in a more in-depth way.
4. Watch one of the videos or read one of the books listed in the resource list below and discuss it in class.



## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

- Kivel, Paul. *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*. Philadelphia: New Society, 1996. Written primarily for a white audience but useful for people of all backgrounds.
- Loewen, James W. *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Touchstone, 1996. Loewen critiques the way that history has been taught in American classrooms, focusing on its bland, Eurocentric bias. He urges educators to focus on real, diverse stories that make up our history. Eye opening for teachers and students alike.
- O'Halloran, Susan. *Kaleidoscope: Valuing Difference & Creating Inclusion*. Available at [www.susanohalloran.com](http://www.susanohalloran.com). A two-level curriculum for schools about diversity, race and dealing with difference. O'Halloran approaches diversity, race, and racism in a way that makes an often intimidating subject approachable and even fun. O'Halloran avoids blame and empowers students to uncover their own biases and to recognize institutional racism and to work for both personal and societal change.
- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. New York: Basic Books, 1997. Written by a professor of psychology for a diverse audience. Focuses specifically on race, racism, and the construction of racial identity among adolescents.
- Zinn, Howard. *A People's History of the United States: 1492-Present*. New York: HarperCollins, 1995. Zinn presents American history from the perspective of those who do not traditionally write history—women, people of color, working class people, and so forth.



## **VIDEOS**

Berhaag, Bertram (Producer/Director). *The Complete Blue Eyed*. Available at [www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org).

This edition contains multiple versions of the "blue-eyed/brown-eyed" experiment that demonstrates how swiftly prejudice affects people. Originally used with grade school students, this exercise has been used with adults with the same results. This edition comes with a facilitator's guide. 93 minutes total; can be watched in shorter segments.

Lucasiewicz, M. (Producer). *True Colors*. Northbrook, IL: MTI Film & Video, 1991. An ABC video with Diane Sawyer that follows two discrimination testers, one black and one white, as they look for jobs and housing and try to buy a car. A good look at institutional racism. 19 minutes.

If you would like to learn more about Susan O'Halloran or engage her to perform at your school, go to [www.susanohalloran.com](http://www.susanohalloran.com) or [www.inspireaclassroom.com](http://www.inspireaclassroom.com).

### **Note to Teachers:**

The **bolded** text can be read out aloud and followed word for word; however, you may want to read over the material a few times so that you are comfortable putting these ideas into your own words, in the way in which you normally talk to your students.





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### Handout #1: DAVY CROCKETT (3 minutes)

The first black child I ever met wore a Davy Crockett cap. So did I. We met at a downtown State Street bus stop. Our mothers had gotten us to Marshall Field's Department Store just in time for the first release of Davy Crockett raccoon skin caps.

I had just turned five. I assumed the boy was the same. We compared caps, the very same caps we had seen Davy wear every Sunday night on the Disneyland TV series. We showed each other our Jim Bowie rubber knives. We chased each other around the bus stop bench and sang Davy's song - "Killed him a ba'ar when he was only three. Davy..."

His bus came first and before either mother could see what was happening, I followed him on. He reached back for me and I reached up the stairs to him. Just as we touched, we flew away from each other. I felt my mother's fingers dig deep into my arm as she yanked me into her body.

"We don't go his way," she whispered.

I strained to see my friend through the reflection in the glass. "Maybe we'll be in the same kindergarten class," I said.

"No! You won't!" My mother chopped the words into my ear.



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Then added, “He lives...” she looked over both shoulders to the people behind us and lowered her voice again. “He lives in a ‘different’ neighborhood.” Still, her voice in a whisper I didn't understand.

But the lesson had been transmitted all the same. He was different. For the first time, I saw the difference the way my mother did. But even more subtle, more damaging, never spoken but transmitted through muscle to bone...

We lived in different places, and where we lived was better.





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## Handout #2: US vs. THEM (8 minutes)

My family loved to be on the winning team. We loved our sports! But no sport was watched as consistently, as devotedly, as religiously as the Friday Night fights.

Tradition started with my grandparents. Before they came to live with us, they had been live-in caretakers for the Knights of Columbus Clubhouse, a Catholic men's organization in the "old" Irish neighborhood. Everyone knew them as Pa and Ma McHugh. First floor of the clubhouse had a bar that was the center for neighborhood gambling. My grandparents helped people make bets on football, baseball, basketball games and the Friday night fights.

Ma and Pa came to live with us when I was six in our newly built house in our newly built neighborhood on Chicago's southwest side. They brought the Friday night fight tradition with them. In the afternoon, my grandmother would show up with a hat filled with little folded pieces of paper. You put a quarter in the hat and picked out a piece of paper. There was a number written on the paper that stood for a round. If there was a knockout in your round, you won the pot. You got the prize!

The Friday night fights at my house were highly interactive. I don't just mean simple sideline coaching, sitting on the couch and yelling at the TV screen. My whole family, they were in the ring with the boxers, up on their feet, swinging, punching, grunting, taking blows, yelling at the refs, "Hey, he hit



below belt!” “The ref needs new glasses!” “Oh, we were robbed!”

My Dad had done some amateur boxing when he was young so he had a good jab. My mother’s swing was mild but enthusiastic. My Grandfather punched up toward the ceiling. I don’t know why, maybe getting ready for his victory stance. My Grandmother was a nervous watcher. “Oh, come on. Oh, come on,” she’d cry. And, since she held onto the pot, the whole time those fights were always accompanied by the jingle of coins. My brother was like I was: dancing around, all excited, not about what was on the TV, but by the adults in front of us.

When the round was over – Ding! - they’d fall back on the couch in true exhaustion. My brother and I wiped their foreheads with towels. We gave them glasses of water, pulled on their teeth. We didn’t know about the mouth guards really, but we’d seen the trainers do something with the boxers’ teeth.

Then, Ding! They’d be back up swinging. My grandfather would point to us kids and say, “You could be a champion! Boxing is the game where poor kids can become kings!”

I loved the interaction on Friday nights, I wasn't so sure about the game. My questions were never really answered. Everybody’d be swinging and I’d be asking, “Why do their moms and dads let them play that game if they can get so hurt?”

They’d laugh and someone would say, “Because they can make a lot of money, honey!”

Well, we were winning money on the game so that made some sense.

My grandparents also made side bets on which boxer they thought would win the game. They bet according to color and they weren’t subtle about it. Bet on the white guy if it was white against black. Bet for the Mexican or Cuban boxer – if it was brown against black and if it was two black boxers, bet on the light skin man.

The biggest reason for all the racial hate, in my neighborhood anyway, seemed to be the fight over turf, the fight over our homes. In St. Thomas More parish, I grew up surrounded by a kind of war mentality, constant ambush talk about “them.” Every evening, I’d sit on the front porches of 84th Street and listen to my neighbors say things such as, “Do you think Halsted Avenue will hold?” and “I hear ‘they’ took 63rd Street.” Or “Jamie said he saw one on Morgan Avenue. No, I swear, on Morgan!”

All the time I was growing up, white people who had lived east of us in “changing” neighborhoods flooded into our parish, St. Thomas More. They arrived in our neighborhood and the neighborhoods



around us - thousands of them in quick succession - like refugees from war with stories of their exile from their parish skating parties, their championship volleyball team, their Altar Guilds and Holy Name Societies.

Night after night, we'd listen to the new arrivals weep for their old parishes. Sometimes, we'd drive downtown with the ladies from the block and one of them would say, "Let's turn off here. I want to see the old house. Put your buttons down." "Put your buttons down" meant "lock your doors," we're driving into a black neighborhood.

We'd drive in. The woman would announce, "Here it is!" We'd turn a corner. And, there would stand a boarded up building or no building at all. During these rituals, the neighbor ladies would begin to cry and tell us how it used to be, the building, the neighborhood, their mothers and dads.

They told us about how neighbors had pledged to each other, promised that they wouldn't move out. Then, how they'd get calls in the middle of the night from strangers, waking them with fright, "You better get out! They're coming for your homes! Get out now while you can still get a good price! While your kids are safe." Terrified, neighbors began to move out under cover of night. The new arrivals told us how next-door-neighbors had talked over the backyard fence about their tulips and the pot roast they'd cooked for dinner, just as they had every night and, then, woke the next morning to discover that a "colored" family had moved in and that their neighbors of forty years were gone. They didn't know where.

But that wouldn't happen to us. Our homes in St. Thomas More were our parent's pride and joy. The prize of lifetime. Every summer night, I'd watch my neighbors wash their sidewalks down. Lord, I'm lucky if I get the dishes out of the sink. But my neighbors had it together to work all day and, still, wash the outside of their houses every night.

And how they fussed over their lawns! I grew up with the Chicago version of the *American Gothic* – husbands and wives, standing in front of their houses, grass clippers in hand staring straight ahead, just daring a blade of grass to grow. They'd dig ditch borders all around their lawns to make sure that not one blade of grass escaped and made contact with the sidewalk. That postage stamp size lawn and small bungalow house said you were somebody. Said you took care of your family, your whole family. Because, not only were our mothers home back then, but we all had aunts and uncles, grandmothers and grandfathers living with us and keeping an eye out for us kids. The good news is I had a hundred parents; the bad news is I had a hundred parents.



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But we all belonged on 84<sup>th</sup> Street. We all belonged in St. Thomas More Parish. But some people did not belong. They'd try to make us leave, but we'd show them—our neighborhood would 'hold'! But, deep inside, we realized that we were only shadow boxing because we knew that always, always, those legions of black people stood poised, ready to march into our neighborhoods, taking us over, one block at a time. By the time I was fourteen and entering high school, I had learned that when it came to the fight over where we would live, it was us against them.





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### Handout #3: THE DR. KING MARCH (10 minutes)

It was Friday, August 12, 1966. I was sixteen years old and Dr. Martin Luther King was holding an Open Housing March through my all-white neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago.

The day that Dr. King's people marched through my neighborhood my living room was as dark as a cave and hot, August dog days hot in that tiny living room. The march was being held on 79<sup>th</sup> Street, four blocks from my house, but, still, the lights were out; the doors and windows locked; the curtains pulled shut in the middle of the afternoon. I hung on our living room curtains, trying to sneak a peek outside.

My grandmother shouted to me, "I said leave those curtains alone! The priests said so at mass, Susan. No going out till after the marchers are gone."

"Ma-aa," I complained to my grandmother. "I'm not going out. I'm just looking!"

"Well, don't look!" To my grandmother, it was as if seeing one stray marcher would strike me blind.

My grandparents sat at the dining room table. "Oh, what do the coloreds want?" my grandmother moaned. "What do they want?" My grandfather answered her. "First, they want our jobs and, now, they want our houses."



I rolled my eyes. My grandmother ignored my insolence and opted for a softer approach to bring me away from the windows. Seeing that the priests' warnings had had no effect on me, she tried local politics instead. "You know, Susan," she said gently. "Mr. Burke said so, too. 'No going out.'"

The night before, Mr. Burke, our precinct captain, had showed up at our front door and talked to my father. My father taught at an all-black high school and so his racial attitudes were different than lots of the people in my neighborhood. "I'll be back in a bit," my father told me as he walked out the door with Mr. Burke.

"What's happening?" I asked.

My father told me that there was new construction on 79th Street. He said, "Mr. Burke is rounding up some of the men to put a tarp over the bricks so that people won't throw them at the marchers. That's all we need in this neighborhood, bricks being thrown at the marchers tomorrow. Don't say anything. Don't frighten your grandparents."

He didn't mention anything about frightening me. And I was scared. There had been all kinds of riots in the United States earlier that summer of 1966 – people had been killed! Those days I went to bed with racial conflict from the ten o'clock news meshing with my dreams. I woke up in the morning half-expecting to look out my front window and see that the sidewalks had buckled overnight. Part of me expected the whole city to blow.

But that day, the day of Dr. King's march, I was the model of calmness with my grandmother. "Ma, the marchers are four blocks away! Really, there's nothing to worry about. I'm just going to step outside to get some fresh air. For health purposes." I started toward the door.

"Nooooo," she insisted.

I didn't move her way.

She began to wring her apron. "Oh, why are they here? What do the coloreds want? What do they want?"

"The coloreds?" my grandfather said. "They want everything."

I had had enough. "Ma, it's too hot in here. It's not healthy. I'll be right back." I walked out the front door before she could say another word. I felt a strange mixture of shame and triumph. Shame for the part of me that was hating them so, so embarrassed by my grandparents' prejudices and, then,



the part of me that felt triumph because I'd done it. Dr. King's people were marching through my neighborhood and I'd done something: I'd marched out my front door.

At sixteen, it was the best I could do.

But, when I opened the front door that August day in 1966, I opened the door to silence. My block was deserted, as quiet as the eclipse day when our parents had kept us kids inside because the nuns had sent notes home saying we'd go blind if we looked at the sun. My brother and I had snuck outside and used the hose to make a puddle so we could see the eclipse in the reflection of the water. My grandmother caught us and screamed. "No! Don't look! Don't look! You'll go blind!"

That Friday of the march, I strained to hear any sound at all coming from 79th Street. Usually on a hot day, the front porches of 84<sup>th</sup> Street would be filled with people, sitting like drooping flags praying for a breeze. But, that day of the march down 79<sup>th</sup> Street, I was the only one sitting outside. It was as if someone had dropped a neutron bomb, only the buildings remained.

We had seen the news footage of the Open Housing marches the last three Sundays before at Marquette Park just a few neighborhoods north of us. On the television news, I watched a tattooed teenager with an armband that read, "Death Before Dishonor." He flung a heavy, metal sewer cap right into the crowd as though it were a Frisbee. Then, his buddy pitched a rock. It swerved through the air and sliced a ridge across the forehead of a nun. A nun!

"Sister," he yelled, "seeing you with these coloreds -- I just lost my religion."

Meanwhile, on the streets that lined the Park, TV cameras showed us pictures of demonstrators' cars set on fire. At the Marquette Park lagoons, groups of white men pressed their bodies into the steel hulks of demonstrators' cars, grunting together, sliding the cars right into the ponds, the tails of the cars waving goodbye as they sank. In the park where I'd fished out golf balls for my Dad! In the park, where I'd kissed a boy by the handball courts!

Then, the news cut to the scene of the demonstrators, marching, holding hands crisscross style, singing songs, not even flinching when firecrackers, cherry bombs exploded all around them - the marchers filing through a tunnel of white people, shoulder to shoulder, lining all the streets, making a thin crevice of hate for the demonstrators to pass through. The tunnel of white people, shouting all the time, shouting, "Coloreds, go home! Go live with your own kind. Go home!" Shouting!

But, on my block that Friday afternoon, nothing. An eerie, eerie silence. I wondered: Were my neighbors like the whites at Marquette Park? Had they found the bricks under the tarp by



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79<sup>th</sup> street? Or were they indoors behind drawn curtains hoping for no trouble, wishing for it all to just go away? I didn't know where anybody was.

I looked up to see if my grandmother was peering at me from the bay window. She wasn't. I walked over to our park, Ashburn Park, three doors away. It was a small park compared to Marquette Park. But usually, on a summer afternoon, the park would be filled with people watching ball games: spiked shoes flying, puffs of dirt around home base, the bouffant hairdo mothers curling their painted fingernails around the chain link of the backstops and yelling their lungs out for their slow pitch husbands and their Little League sons. But, that day, the park was empty, no people at all.

I sat down on the park bumper, the black and white striped guardrail that kept anyone from accidentally driving into the park. My grandmother could see me if she needed to. I sat there and felt a wave of something, a hum of something. Overhead, a mass of swamp green army helicopters chopped at the air! The army in St. Thomas More! I could feel the air vibrate against my skin.

There was nothing to do but look at them and hold your ears (whap! whap! whap!). Finally, the helicopters passed and everything fell silent again, as quiet as the moment of Consecration during mass. But, then, down the middle of 84<sup>th</sup> Street, came a gray metallic truck. On top of the truck was a flag. I stared at it, and then closed my eyes to make it go away. But when I opened my eyes, the flag was still there -- a Nazi flag, bright, bright red with a white circle and a black swastika in the middle.

The loudspeaker next to the flag blared into my neighbors' houses, "White power rally! White power rally! Marquette Park. Next Sunday at noon." It was a fact-giving, informational voice that assumed all the persuading had already been done. The truck stopped in front of me. A man in black leather pants, jacket and what seemed like black leather hair came running out of the truck. One lapel held a "We Want Wallace" button, the other proclaimed, "Up With The KKK." The man handed me a leaflet. When I looked up, he was back in his truck. Gone.

My block stood still, empty, the air thin. I felt as though I could suffocate just sitting there. It was as if the army, the marchers and the KKK had stolen the air molecules in my neighborhood, leaving us little to breathe.

Vaguely, I could hear the muffled sound of the loudspeaker on the next block. I thought about how my church said to love everyone. I thought about the picture of Dr. King I hung on my bedroom wall. I thought of the kids of color, my new friends I had met in a citywide youth group, and how much I would have loved to live by them. I said to myself so that I would know myself: "I want black people to have the freedom to live wherever they want to. I do. I do. That's what I believe in." It's



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just that I'd never seen one example of where black people moving in, didn't mean white people moving out.

I saw the Nazi truck winding up and down the streets on the other side of the park. If Open Housing worked, black people could live here, but everyone in my neighborhood would be gone; it wouldn't be my neighborhood anymore. I sat on the black and white striped guardrail, sixteen years old, feeling absolutely torn in two. I felt the city's dividing line running right down the middle of my body, cutting through my liver, my stomach, my heart. "Don't look! Don't look!" There is no silence as heavy, as complete as the silence of an eclipse.





## A White Girl Looks at Race: Davy Crockett

### Handout #1A: Discussion Questions

#### Directions

After listening to the story, take a minute to read the following questions and write down your reactions. You may not have time to address all the questions; focus on those that grab your attention. Then share your answers with your group.

In this story, O'Halloran describes the experience of a moment when, as a small child, she recognizes another child as a friend because they are wearing the same hat, from the same television series. O'Halloran is white, the little boy is black, but they both love Davy Crockett! Her mother's strong reaction to O'Halloran's impulse to follow the little boy onto his bus home makes clear without saying anything explicit that white people and black people don't mix and that blacks are inferior to whites.

1. Why do you think O'Halloran is five years old before she meets a black person?
2. What brings the two children together? What do you think would have happened between the two children if the bus hadn't come?
3. What's your first memory of meeting someone of another race? What were your thoughts? Were you able to connect? Why or why not?
4. Do you have friends of other races now? If so, how does your family react to your friendship?

5. O'Halloran and the little boy were brought together by their love of Davy Crockett. What brings you together with your friends who come from different backgrounds?
6. O'Halloran says that her mother conveyed the message that their neighborhood was better than where the little boy lived without actually saying so. It is not uncommon for stereotypes and prejudices to be conveyed in subtle ways rather than said overtly; how have stereotypes about other groups of people been spread in your family or community?





## A White Girl Looks at Race: Us vs. Them

### Handout #2A: Discussion Questions

#### Directions

After listening to the story, take a minute to read the following questions and write down your reactions. You may not have time to address all the questions; focus on those that grab your attention. Then share your answers with your group.

In this story, O'Halloran describes watching the Friday night fights on television with her family while growing up in her “new” neighborhood, an all-white enclave on the southwest side of Chicago. Watching the fights brings the family together, as they cheer on their chosen boxer, but O'Halloran notices that there is a hierarchy to their cheering—the family always chooses the lightest-skinned boxer.

Just as boxing pits one side against another, O'Halloran has watched as her friends and family feel they are in a kind of boxing ring, defending their territory, their neighborhoods against “them”—blacks who are moving into the neighborhood. As a child, O'Halloran struggles with the joy of spending time with her family while watching a sport that allows people to be hurt and with valuing the close-knit fabric of her neighborhood while questioning the justice of keeping others out.

1. O'Halloran clearly loves her family and found joy in spending time with them on Friday nights for the boxing matches, but she also had questions about a sport that pitted poor young men against one another and felt uncomfortable about how the family chose which boxer to bet on. How does O'Halloran's experience of race and sports in the 1950s and 1960s compare with race and sports today?

2. O'Halloran describes the "war mentality" in her neighborhood as her white neighbors tracked the movement of blacks moving into formerly-white neighborhoods. Why did her white neighbors feel "under siege"? What do you think the African Americans who were moving might have been feeling? Why do you think they were moving? Where were they moving from? How might a child growing up in a neighborhood that feels "at war" feel about her own neighborhood or about the "other" who is seen as the enemy?
3. The people in O'Halloran's neighborhood love and take pride in their homes and neighborhood and believe their love for their neighborhood will "save" it. How do you make sense of this love for home and desire to keep others out? What current situations in your own town, state, or country relate to this situation?
4. It's easy to develop an "Us vs. Them" mentality when we love our family, home, school or country and think we have to defend it from those who are not "insiders." How do you think we can love and value these things even while remaining open to others who are new to us or different from us?





## A White Girl Looks at Race: The Dr. King March

### Handout #3A: Discussion Questions

#### Directions

After listening to the story, take a minute to read the following questions and write down your reactions. You may not have time to address all the questions; focus on those that grab your attention. Then share your answers with your group.

In this story, O'Halloran describes the oppressive nature of the day that Dr. King and Civil Rights marchers marched in her neighborhood. Now a teen, O'Halloran has been making friends of all colors in a new city-wide youth group, but her family and neighbors are not interested in having blacks move into their neighborhoods. O'Halloran has watched other neighborhoods and cities explode around issues of race and is both frightened and eager to at least see this march in her own neighborhood, but on the hot day in August, everyone on her block is inside, doors shut, trying to avoid the changes that are happening. O'Halloran ventures out, only to be confronted by silence, heat, a lone racist, and army helicopters hovering above. O'Halloran wrestles with her desire for a fair society and for her neighborhood to remain the same.

1. O'Halloran writes about living through a scary time of race riots, demonstrations, and ongoing racial conflict and trying to make sense of it all while her friends and family preferred to avoid talking about, perhaps even facing, these changes. What hard social issues do people in your life avoid? How do you think we should address tense social issues?
2. While the Civil Rights marchers were working for justice, O'Halloran was feeling stuck in her house as the marchers passed by a few blocks away. She defied her grandmother by leaving the house and felt proud because "I'd marched out my front door." While this might not have



been a political victory, it was a personal one. What big social issues do you worry about? What about the world do you want to change? What small (or big) steps might you take towards those goals?

3. In the 1960s, Dr. King and the Civil Rights marchers were working for Open Housing, for a housing market that was open to all, no matter their racial or ethnic background. O'Halloran thought "I want black people to have the freedom to live wherever they want to." But then O'Halloran thinks "It's just that I'd never seen one example of where black people moving in, didn't mean white people moving out. . . . If Open Housing worked, black people could live here, but everyone in my neighborhood would be gone. It wouldn't be my neighborhood anymore." What do you know about "white flight" (the situation where white people move away from a neighborhood when black people start moving in)? Have you experienced this or know of similar situations? If so, how have people described either "side" of the situation?
4. Because of the dilemma noted in question #3, O'Halloran feels torn in two, like the color line that divides the city is running right down the middle her body, cutting her in two as well. What conflicts do you experience about race and race relations? Where are you of "two minds" or "two hearts"? How might you work on bringing your two sides together?

