

USING PHOTOGRAPHS TO TEACH SOCIAL JUSTICE: EXPLORING IDENTITY¹

Objectives

Students like photographs. They're visual and engaging, so they make great learning tools. Photographs are an excellent way to capture the spirit of an event or idea. However, learning how to interpret photographs can be challenging. These lessons will help students learn to think about photos more deeply. In addition, the lessons will expand students' knowledge of social justice issues.

Materials:

- Pen and Paper for each student
- Copies of attached photographs, photograph captions and questions

Procedure:

Photograph A

1. Take a few moments to recap the identity chart lessons with students. How do we define identity?
2. Have students look at **Photograph A** before reading the caption. Have students think about the following questions individually. Note - students will be discussing them in partners or groups afterwards so they might want to take notes to collect their thoughts.
 - a. Describe the person in the photograph. Just make note of what you see; don't draw any conclusions.
 - b. Why do you think the person is holding two flags? One is a U.S. flag. See if you can figure out where the other flag is from.
 - c. What do you imagine the person in the photo is thinking about and feeling?
 - d. What feelings do you have when you look at the photo?
3. After taking a few minutes to reflect on the questions individually, have students break into partners or small groups. Provide students with the **Photograph A Caption**.
 - a. Does knowing the situation affect your thoughts and feelings about the photo? If so, how?
 - b. What kind of photograph would you take to show your identity?

¹ Teaching Tolerance. Using Photographs to Teach Social Justice

Photograph B

4. Individually, have students make a list to describe each person in the photograph. Use these questions for guidance:
 - a. What is this person's gender?
 - b. What is this person's race?
 - c. What is this person's religion?
5. In groups of three or four have students discuss the following:
 - a. Did you describe the people in the photo the same way? If not, how was your list different?
 - b. What can you usually tell about people just by looking at them? What *can't* you tell about them?
 - c. The subject of a photograph is the main person or thing pictured. As a group, analyze the body language of the subjects of this photograph.
 - i. What emotions do they seem to be conveying?
 - ii. What assumptions can you make about them as individuals? As a group?
 - d. This photograph shows a diverse group of young people. What message do you think the photographer is trying to convey?
6. After discussing these questions, ask each group to write a caption that captures the message. Consider using some of the following sentence starters:
 - a. All people want to be _____.
 - b. The one thing we all have in common is _____.
 - c. We may look different, but _____.
7. Ask each group to write their caption on the board. Take turns so that each group can present and explain its caption to the rest of the class.

Photograph A



Photograph B



Photograph A Caption:

Susana Gutierrez holds Mexican and American flags during an immigration march and protest in Detroit Thursday, May 1, 2008. Immigration activists and civil rights leaders geared up for rallies and marches in cities nationwide, hoping to revive an immigration reform debate grown surprisingly stagnant in this presidential election year. AP Photo/Paul Sancya.

Photograph B Caption:

Jim West took this photograph during a Mix It Up at Lunch Day at Fordson High School in Dearborn, Michigan. Mix It Up at Lunch Day is an international campaign that encourages students to identify, question and cross social boundaries. Learn more about coordinating a Mix It Up at Lunch Day in your school at <https://www.tolerance.org/mix-it-up>