

FACING  
**Difference**  
CHALLENGE



# United States

## Middle School & High School

STUDENTS REBUILD DISCUSSION GUIDE



students  
rebuild



Global Nomads Group has created a library of resources to help educators build connection and learning for students participating in the Facing Difference Challenge and beyond. To learn more about the Facing Difference Challenge, visit [here](#).

**Note to teachers:** Below you will find some thoughts you can use to set up the video, as well as discussion questions you might use or adapt with your students. As there may be some unfamiliar words or locations represented in this video, we recommend that ahead of showing it to your students you (a) pre-watch the video or read the transcript below, noting any vocabulary that may be unfamiliar to your students, (b) review any unfamiliar vocabulary with your students, (c) locate McAllen, Texas on a map.



## Framing

When children are born, they come into a world full of pre-existing historical, social, economic and political conflict. These conflicts shape how children are taught to interact with others, those who look and sound like them and those who do not; those who are taught the same beliefs as them, and those who are not; those whose families and communities have historically faced oppression and those whose families and communities have historically enjoyed privileges. While all children are taught a set of attitudes and beliefs about those the same and different from them, some are taught to embrace differences and some are taught to fear differences. The attitudes and beliefs that we learn ultimately affect the actions we take, the world in which we live, and the possibility for safety, peace and understanding.

In *Luis and Harrison's Story*, we learn about two friends living in McAllen, Texas, a city on the Rio Grande on the United States southern border. In the 2010 Census, McAllen had approximately 130,000 residents, approximately 85% of whom identified as Hispanic/Latino. Luis and Harrison attend school together at Idea Quest College Preparatory, where 91% of the students identify as Hispanic/Latino.



# Discussion Questions

1. What is the basis for the friendship between Luis and Harrison? How did they meet? What are their common interests? How do they each describe their friendship?
2. What do Luis and Harrison seem to have in common? How do they seem to be different?
3. Luis and Harrison talk about how Luis is treated differently when they've traveled with their school to other parts of the country. What assumptions have people made about Luis when he has traveled outside of his town? What assumptions have people made about Harrison? What assumptions have people made about Luis when he is with Harrison? Why are these assumptions hurtful?
4. In different parts of the video we hear Luis or Harrison use the terms discrimination and racism. What is the definition of discrimination? What is the definition of racism? What is the difference between the two terms? What is the same or different in how Luis and Harrison experience racism and discrimination?
5. Luis says of his hometown, "I've never felt the discrimination here personally, because we're such a big majority of Hispanics, but once we head up North to other cities, to other states, you feel that hateful feeling people have towards you, the way they look at you, just the way they treat you. It's just very different." Are there different contexts in your life where you have been treated differently because of aspects of who you are or your racial/ethnic identity?
6. Luis describes going to DC and being followed in stores. Have any of you been followed in stores? If so, how did that feel? If not, how might that feel?
7. Luis and Harrison live in an area that would be affected by a "border wall." How do you think the idea of a border wall would affect them and how they are treated?
8. Luis said that his parents were first skeptical of his friendship with Harrison, "el güero, the white guy." Harrison later says that Luis' family trusts him because they have seen over the years that he is "not that stereotypical white person." What is a stereotype? What do you think he means by the "stereotypical white person?" How might the ways Luis has been stereotyped when outside of his community influence his parents' perceptions of white people? How do stereotypes influence the way people treat one another?
9. What do Luis and Harrison see as the benefits of having strong friendships across racial, ethnic and cultural differences? What is required to maintain and sustain friendships across difference?
10. At the end of the video, Luis says "Our friendship is something that will survive all of this." What do you think he is referring to?



## Additional Activity Options

**Venn diagram:** As a class, create a Venn diagram noting what Luis and Harrison have in common and what are their differences. Students then pair with “the most different person from me in this room” and create a similar diagram.

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**Behind the eyes poem:** Students will write a poem inspired by a story told in the video, first from behind Luis’ eyes, then from behind Harrison’s eyes.

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**Political Power Investigation:** Students will do web-based research on the history, economy and politics of McAllen, Texas to deepen their understanding of the context in which Luis and Harrison’s friendship exists.



# Transcript

TIME	SPEAKER	DIALOGUE
00:00:15	Luis	<p>My name is Luis Cavazos and I'm 17 and I live in the Rio Grande Valley. Both my parents were born in Mexico. My dad moved to Florida and my mom did as well. Both me and my sister were born there. And then I moved here when I was about 8. My family has always been tight. We share meals together. We go on family trips. It's always amazing being that close as a family.</p>
00:00:37	Harrison	<p>My name is Harrison Vickmark. I am 17 years old and I live in McAllen, Texas. I'm half Russian. My mother is from Lithuania and my father is from Norway. I am a senior at Idea Quest College Preparatory. One day I saw Luis playing cards. Eventually he invited me over to play with him. So eventually that's how we met.</p>
00:00:59	Luis	<p>I would always tell my parents, "I'm going out with Harrison." And they would say, "Oh, el güero." Which means the white guy. "Why do you hang out with him so much. He's so different than us."</p>
00:01:09	Harrison	<p>I've definitely seen racism through two different lenses, because here whenever I go to school, I'm the minority and I kind of see how people treat me. But whenever we do go out of our city, I definitely see racism through my own lens of how other people treat Luis. And that's enforced my understanding of racism and the way that people think and how the other side also feels.</p>



# Transcript (cont.)

TIME	SPEAKER	DIALOGUE
00:01:31	Luis	<p>I've never felt the discrimination here, personally, because we're such a big majority of Hispanics. But once we head up North to other cities, to other states, you feel that hateful feeling people have towards you. The way they look at you, just the way they treat you. It's just very different. We visit D.C. and Pennsylvania to see colleges and every time we go into some sort of store, they see us and say 'Oh did they put that in their pocket' or 'Can you really pay for that?' It makes me feel terrible, that people think that just because you're Hispanic or because you're African-American they can't afford these things or 'oh they're going to steal it.' It makes anyone feel bad. But when me and Harrison are together, and we walk into these stores, they would say "oh he's with the white guy, he's fine." Just because I am with the white guy, they think I am not a threat. It's just, it's hurtful.</p>
00:02:23	Harrison	<p>I'm proud of my friendship with Luis because we don't treat each other any differently than we might treat somebody else. We've definitely inspired each other to become more than we are and experience different things. Luis' family trusts me now because we've been friends for so long that they can see I'm not the same person they may have thought I was. I'm not that stereotypical white person.</p>
00:02:45	Luis	<p>The world is a very colorful place because of all this diversity. It's an integral part of being a human being to have these connections with other cultures.</p>
00:02:54	Harrison	<p>Being friends with people from different ethnic groups opens your eyes and your understanding of different cultures and different peoples and also be able to see the other side. Something that's different.</p>
00:03:04	Luis	<p>There's always barriers between every culture, and it's up to that person to cross that barrier and break through it. To really learn the customs that everyone else has. Our friendship is something that will survive all of this.</p>



# Take Action

**Make a self-portrait:** Support your students to participate in the Facing Difference Challenge by creating a self-portrait that reflects their identity and experiences. Each portrait sent to Students Rebuild by May 4, 2018 generates a \$3 matching donation from the Bezos Family Foundation—up to \$600,000—to support peace building programs in Nigeria, Sri Lanka, and the South Caucasus region of Eastern Europe.

**Join the conversation:** As part of the Facing Difference Challenge our partner Global Nomads Group will be hosting **virtual town hall dialogues** on topics about our differences including religion, race, and immigration. These virtual town halls will be live streamed; your class/team can submit questions and/or answers to the on-air participants through a facilitated chat room. **All you need to join is an internet connection.**

**RSVP for the upcoming webcasts here. Once you have registered, we will contact you with updates and additional information.**

**Upcoming webcast are as follows:**

- A Conversation on Race; Feb 28th 2018;  
11am EST/8am PT
- A Conversation on Immigration; Apr 27th 2018;  
12pm EST/9am PT

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