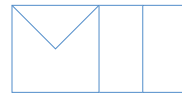


FACING
Difference
CHALLENGE



Georgia

Middle School & High School

STUDENTS REBUILD DISCUSSION GUIDE



students
rebuild



Note to teachers: Thank you for participating the Students Rebuild Challenge! Below are suggestions to help introduce *Aska and Nino's Story* as well as discussion questions you might use or adapt. 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 the unfamiliar vocabulary with your students before showing the video, (c) locate Georgia and Azerbaijan 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 who live in the countries where they were born, and those who do not. 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 and peace.

Across the world, people immigrate from their country of origin to other countries for various reasons, most often seeking safety, economic security, and fleeing religious or political persecution. According to the United Nations, the number of international immigrants worldwide reached 244 million in 2015 (this number includes almost 20 million refugees). Upon arrival

in a new country, many immigrants face discrimination, bias, negative stereotypes and mistreatment. Immigrants are often underemployed based on their prior professional credentials and experiences, work low-paying jobs, have limited political representation, and work hard to support the family members who live with them and who remain in their country of origin.

In *Aska and Nino's Story*, we meet two friends who live in Georgia, a country located where the Asian and European continents meet. Georgia has about 3.7 million inhabitants, 87% of whom identify as Georgian. The largest immigrant population in Georgia immigrated from neighboring Azerbaijan and comprises 6.5% of the total population. Nino was born in Georgia. Aska and her family are Azerbaijani immigrants, also referred to as Azeri.

The story of Aska and Nino shows what it is like to embrace difference and forge friendships within the historical, social, economic, and political arrangements that shape our perceptions of each other.



Discussion Questions

1. When we first meet Nino, she tells us her age, who she lives with and then states, “We are Georgian.” What do you think being “Georgian” means to her? What do you think being “American” means to people born in the United States? Why does national identity matter to people?

2. Nino shares that “In the past Georgians and Azerbaijanis fought with each other.” Later we hear Aska talk about a school she went to where Georgian students did not want to be friends with her and had negative stereotypes of all Azerbaijanis. Why do you think non-immigrants often harbor negative stereotypes of immigrants? Why do you think non-immigrants mistreat immigrants?

3. Aska says that Nino is like a sister to her. In fact, they look like they could actually be sisters. How do you think the treatment of immigrants is similar or different when the immigrants are visually distinct from the majority of people born in the country to which they immigrated?

4. Who in your family is or was an immigrant? What are the immigrant communities in your geographic area? How do immigrants and non-immigrants in your community interact?

5. Aska and Nino believe that Georgians and Azerbaijanis should be friends, noting that they are first and foremost humans. When we think of ourselves as a human species, how much does immigration status or national identity matter?

6. Many people describe the United States as a nation of immi-

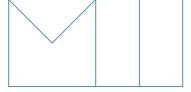
grants with most people able to trace their ancestry to another country. Our first president George Washington famously noted that, ““The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respected Stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions; whom we shall welcome to a participation of all our rights and privileges.” Does the United States still live up to that ideal? Why or why not?

7. For Aska and Nino, friendship across difference is rich and rewarding. What seems to be the basis for their connection? What can make it hard for immigrants and non-immigrants to connect through friendship? What can both immigrants and non-immigrants do to forge such connections?

8. Aska notes that some Georgian parents forbid their children from forming friendships with Azerbaijani peers. Why would parents forbid their child from forming any kind of friendship? What should friends do when their friendship is being forbidden?

9. Aska says she wants to end oppression of people. What does it mean to oppress someone or to be oppressed? What types of oppression have you observed in your community?

10. Nino says it’s important “to do our best to understand each other.” If you were trying to understand someone who was born in a different country than you, how would you go about trying to understand them? What are some actions people from different backgrounds or countries can take when they want to understand each other?



Additional Activity Options

Venn diagram:

As a class, create a Venn diagram noting what Aska and Nino 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.

Behind the eyes:

Each student will think of a person from a group in their country or community that they are not part of. From

the perspective of that person, they will free-write their perceptions of the group they are a part of. (e.g., Aska would write from her imagined perspective of a Georgian about Azerbaijanis and Nino would write from her imagined perspective of an Azerbaijani about Georgians).

Get more information on Georgia:

Find more information on studentsrebuild.org

Go deeper:

Explore the United Nations Together Campaign to promote the respect, safety and dignity of migrants and refugees. Commit as a class or as individuals to an activity connected to this campaign.

Virtual Reality:

Participate in the Facing Difference Virtual Reality experience. Find out more on www.studentsrebuild.org



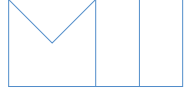
Transcript

TIME	SPEAKER	DIALOGUE
00:00:24	Aska	My name is Aska Akhmedova. I live in Gardabani. I'm 15.
00:00:30	Aska	My family comes from Azerbaijan. We moved to Georgia. There were some problems that made us do this. But we have very good conditions here. We love it here, living with Georgians.
00:01:04	Nino	My name is Nino Chovelidze. I'm 13. I live with my brother, father and grandparents.
00:01:14	Nino	We are Georgians and live in Gardabani.
00:01:22	Nino	In the past there has been some tension between Georgians and Azerbaijanis.
00:01:28	Nino	I think that this was foolishness. They should have realized that and became friends.
00:01:36	Nino	Then, nobody would have had any problems.
00:01:42	Nino	I have a friend, Aska. We met in school. We've become really good friends.
00:01:50	Aska	I know Nino from school. I visit her often, and we are friends. We know each other well.
00:02:01	Aska	We don't need a reason to laugh. We start laughing just by looking at each other. She is a smiley person.
00:02:13	Aska	At school, someone has said "You're Azerbaijani, we are Georgian, why should we be friends with each other?"
00:02:23	Aska	Some Georgians think this way. They think that Azerbaijanis are not good people.
00:02:33	Aska	They think that Azerbaijanis are dirty and smelly.
00:02:44	Aska	It makes me feel bad, of course, when people say these things. It breaks my heart.



Transcript (cont.)

TIME	SPEAKER	DIALOGUE
00:02:59	Aska	There are friendships that are forbidden by some parents.
00:03:04	Aska	They say that there shouldn't be friendly relationships between Georgian and Azerbaijani.
00:03:15	Aska	But if both of you are good for each other, why should you not be friends?
00:03:31	Aska	The thing that I want to change in the world is oppression of the people. You just shouldn't oppress anyone.
00:04:43	Nino	We live together, in one environment, so it's important to treat each other warmly, and do our best to understand each other.
00:03:57	Aska	I believe that Nino and I will be friends until the end, because of the fact that we are really good friends.
00:04:06	Aska	It does not matter whether you are Azerbaijani or Georgian, you are both humans.



Take Action

Make a self-portrait:

Support your students in creating a self-portrait that reflects their identity and experiences. Each portrait sent to Students Rebuild 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 around our differences ranging from religion, race, and immigration. These webcasts will feature a live conversation between youth involved in CARE and Search for Common Ground's peacebuilding programs as well as other Students Rebuild participants. These virtual town halls will be lived streamed; your team can send questions to on-air participants as well as participate in a facilitated chat room. All you need to join is an internet connection. Go to www.studentsrebuild.org to register.