

OTHER VOICES:

'Know Where Your Group Is At'

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Body

The following remarks were taken from more than 20 hours of discussions with teen-agers from the New York City region. Excerpts appear with each article.

Q Has it been the immigration experience, from your perspective, that different groups don't mix?

EMMA KRAMER-WHEELER, 16, Brooklyn (Edward R. Murrow High School): It's the language barrier for the most part.

JUAN RIVERA, 18, Brooklyn (Bushwick High School): Yeah, it's, like, in Bushwick. You walk inside the lunchroom, you know, any period, and as soon as you walk in, the biggest group here is, you know, Dominicans, as I said. And you have Puerto Rican people over here. And you have Jamaicans over there. And then you have the mixed group over here. . . . And it's just like that's it. You know where your group is at.

Q Is there resentment of immigrants? For instance, resentment of their jobs?

BERNARDO VASQUEZ, 17, Manhattan (A. Philip Randolph High School): That's the problem with immigration nativism over here. Why should that person come over here and take my job? I'm American, right? But, no. I get on the job first. Why should they come? I don't care if they're more qualified. I have citizenship.

WUBNESH HYLTON, 19, Brooklyn (Hunter College): I know a lot of people who really don't care about -- you know, that fear for immigrants coming and taking jobs is just not there, because there was never no jobs there in the first place. So, they're not really concerned about, "Oh, he's going to take my job," because I didn't have one.

Q When I say that word "assimilation," what do you think of?

WUBNESH Well, conformity. Giving up your own identity, melting into another culture to get ahead. I know some of my Asian friends, I think, like, Asians have a hard time in society, because they're always stereotyped. It's completely different from anything that we know here. And they're always stereotyped as the model minority. And, so, they feel the need to assimilate. And one of my Asian friends was telling me she only dates white men. And another one of my Asian friends, she only dates black men. So, it's, like: "My culture no longer means anything."

Q Do you ever have a sense of loss being here?

BERNARDO As a Dominican, I relate so much to the second motherland, which is the Dominican Republic. But over here, I guess all immigrants . . . have to identify with something that is not America. Because America is no culture. America is a mixture of -- it is like the melting pot. So, we have to identify with something that is our culture.

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ZAIRE GRAHAM, 17, Bronx (High School of Fashion Industries): Being that in my family I have so much of everything, I don't **know** what nationality I am. Because I have ancestors that was raped, you **know**, so I have a little white. I have a little Creole. I have a little Cherokee Indian. The majority of it is black, true. But I have my grandfather's this, my mother has half of that. So I don't **know** what nationality I am. So when you ask were we robbed when we came to America of some of our culture, I believe I was robbed totally.

Graphic

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