

## LESSON GOALS

- ◆ Use oral history to understand ways that neighborhoods affect an individual's sense of belonging.
- ◆ Analyze an oral history to identify broader forces, often outside the neighborhood itself, that may lead to neighborhood change.
- ◆ Analyze an oral history to identify how individuals themselves can become forces of change in neighborhoods.

## MATERIALS

All oral history clips and transcripts mentioned in this lesson are available for streaming or download at [muslims.brooklynhistory.org](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org).

### Graphic Organizer

*Interpreting Emotions  
from Oral History*

### \*TEACHER'S NOTE

**NSEERS.** For more information on this program, see the Additional Resources section of [muslims.brooklynhistory.org](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org).

## MUSLIMS IN BROOKLYN CLIPS

The “Belonging in Brooklyn” clips present different ways that narrators experience feelings of belonging in their neighborhoods. Through these anecdotes, we see the way that Brooklyn’s Muslims have reshaped their neighborhoods for the better, as exemplified in the oral histories of Siraj Wahhaj, Shanaha Hanif, and Mahmoud Widdi. The clips also reveal that despite strong communities, Islamophobia and racism can make even the most familiar place feel unwelcome. These forces of exclusion are exemplified by the oral histories of Mohammad Razvi and Fahiyam Abdul-Wasi. These oral histories were conducted and arranged by Brooklyn Historical Society in 2018 and 2019.

### “ANTI-DRUG PATROLS 1: THE CALL” 5:24

*Siraj Wahhaj describes what motivated him to lead a local anti-drug campaign in Bedford-Stuyvesant in the late 1980s.*

[muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral\\_history\\_clip/anti-drug-patrols1-siraj-wahhaj](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral_history_clip/anti-drug-patrols1-siraj-wahhaj)

### “ANTI-DRUG PATROLS 2: 40-DAY PATROL” 6:13

*Siraj Wahhaj describes how his group worked with the New York Police Department in an anti-drug campaign that lasted 40 days.*

[muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral\\_history\\_clip/anti-drug-patrols2-siraj-wahhaj](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral_history_clip/anti-drug-patrols2-siraj-wahhaj)

### “CONEY ISLAND EXODUS” 2:50

*Mohammad Razvi describes how the federal **NSEERS** (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) special registration program led to a mass exodus of Pakistanis from Ditmas Park in 2002.\**

[muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral\\_history\\_clip/coney-island-exodus-mo-razvi](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral_history_clip/coney-island-exodus-mo-razvi)

### “RACIAL STRIFE IN THE CITY” 8:19

*Fahiyam Abdul-Wasi describes the racial tension in New York City in the 1980s, specifically the danger he felt as a Black man attending school in the predominantly white neighborhood of Bensonhurst.*

[muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral\\_history\\_clip/racial-strife-city-fahiyam-abdul-wasi](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral_history_clip/racial-strife-city-fahiyam-abdul-wasi)

### “PUBLIC SPACES” 7:07

*Shahana Hanif describes how her desire to live “beyond the stoop” and her alliance with local community activists to create more public spaces in Kensington were initially inspired by events in her home country of Bangladesh.*

[muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral\\_history\\_clip/public-spaces-shahana-hanif](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral_history_clip/public-spaces-shahana-hanif)

### “WE HELPED IT CHANGE” 6:07

*Mahmoud Widdi describes the influence his father had on their neighborhood and the way the community memorialized him by petitioning the city to name a street in his honor.*

[muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral\\_history\\_clip/helped-change-mahmoud-widdi](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org/oral_history_clip/helped-change-mahmoud-widdi)

## LESSON SEQUENCE

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### ◆ Think-Pair-Share Prompt *(Choose one or many.)*

- Think about the neighborhood surrounding your school. Imagine that 50 years have passed. In what ways do you think this neighborhood might change? In what ways do you think it might stay the same?
- What do you think explains the forces of change in a neighborhood?
- What makes you feel like you belong in a neighborhood? What makes you feel like you don't belong in a neighborhood?

### ◆ Share

- Synthesize students' responses to come up with some generalizations on how neighborhoods change and how they stay the same. Consider what forces cause these changes: Are they local? National? International?
- Additionally, what forces in a neighborhood create or hinder feelings of belonging? Is it events, like an incident of police brutality? Or is it subtler and every day experiences, like community members who always smile and say hello?

### ◆ Transition

Say, *Today we are going to listen to some oral history clips from the Muslims in Brooklyn oral history collection in which individuals describe their experiences in different neighborhoods.*

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## INTRODUCTION: REFLECTING ON NEIGHBORHOODS

### 1 Whole Group Listening

- Choose one oral history from the **Muslims in Brooklyn Clips** list that appears at the beginning of this lesson plan that you think will most interest your students. We recommend starting with "**Racial Strife in the City.**"
- Say, *Today we are going to listen to some oral histories from the Muslims in Brooklyn oral history collection in which individuals from Brooklyn describe their experiences in their neighborhood.*

## LISTENING & REFLECTING

## LESSON SEQUENCE

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### 2 Listening Protocol

While listening to the clip you chose for the “Whole Group Listening” section, students should use the “Interpreting Emotions from Oral History” graphic organizer. Students should listen for words or phrases that describe feelings of belonging, for example: inclusion, exclusion, empowerment, and disempowerment.

### 3 Share

Ask students to share their responses. What made the narrator feel included in their neighborhood? Excluded from their neighborhood? Feel empowered in their communities? Disempowered in their communities?

### 4 Reflect

- Do you identify with what the narrator was saying about their neighborhood?
- Do you see the issues described by the narrator in your own communities?
- What might you recommend to help increase forces of inclusion or empowerment in your communities?

### 5 Transition

*Say, Now, we’re going to listen to more clips from the Muslims in Brooklyn Oral Histories narrators as they describe their experiences with feelings of belonging in their neighborhoods.*

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### 1 Small Group Listening

After modelling the process of listening as a whole group, small groups should choose one of the additional oral histories included in the **Muslims in Brooklyn Clips** section of this lesson.

### 2 Repeat Listening Protocol

Ask groups to listen to the clip, using the *Interpreting Emotions from Oral History* graphic organizer and repeating the protocol they used during the whole group listening section. Additionally, they should respond to the prompts below:

**CHOOSE YOUR  
OWN NARRATION**

## LESSON SEQUENCE

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- Do you identify with what the narrator was saying?
- Do you see the issues described by the narrator in your own community?

### 3 Compare & Contrast

- Compare the issues mentioned in the two oral histories you've listened to. What are the similarities and differences?

### 4 Share

Groups should create a short presentation on:

- How the narrator described their sense of belonging and/or exclusion in their neighborhood.
- A specific change in the neighborhood described by the narrator, and how it impacted feelings of belonging.

### 5 Summary

- How does our position in neighborhoods affect our feelings of belonging?
- What are the ways that political events affect the way we feel about ourselves?
- How can we impact the forces of inclusion or exclusion in our communities?

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### ☰ Research Project

Oral history is an important source for learning about historic events and understanding how those events affected individuals. Many of the oral histories selected here contain specific events from late-twentieth and twenty-first century American history. Students should choose one of the events mentioned by the narrators and do more research — perhaps with a newspaper article or other secondary source — to write an essay on the specific event described in the oral history.

### ☰ Poetry

Alternatively, use the *Black Out and Collage Poetry Lesson* available at [muslims.brooklynhistory.org](https://muslims.brooklynhistory.org). Student work should evoke the themes of the lesson: feelings of belonging and forces of change.

## APPLICATION

# INTERPRETING EMOTIONS FROM ORAL HISTORY

GRAPHIC ORGANIZER



**NARRATOR**

**CLIP NAME**

**1 WHAT THE NARRATOR SAID**

A large speech bubble with a solid black outline and a tail pointing towards the bottom left. Inside the bubble are 12 horizontal green lines for writing.

**2 THE EMOTION I THINK  
THEY ARE FEELING**

A large speech bubble with a dotted black outline and a tail pointing towards the bottom right. Inside the bubble are 12 horizontal green lines for writing.

**BY STUDENT**