

# Unit Activities

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## Before You Begin—30 minutes

Discuss the following questions as a whole class.

Consider these questions before you begin

- What are words you use to identify yourself? Do you use words to characterize your gender, your family relationships, ethnicity, economic class, location, nationality, occupation, and/or age?
- How has globalization shaped or changed your identity? How has globalization shaped or changed the identities of other people you know?
- Now that you've studied world history, what problems do you expect world historians would have in analyzing the effects of globalization on individual and group identities in the late twentieth century?

## Watch the Video for “Unit 26: World History and Identity”—30 minutes

### Activity 1: Globalization and Identity—60 minutes

For this last unit, you will use the materials provided to write an essay that compares the effects of globalization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on the identities of Chinese migrants and Chechen nationalists.

#### Information on Chinese Migrants

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Chinese who emigrated from their homeland eventually created a transnational identity. People left China in the nineteenth century because of adverse conditions resulting from famine, overpopulation, foreign invasion, and civil wars. During the second half of the nineteenth century, two million Chinese migrated to a wide variety of destinations. These places included Siberia and Manchuria, the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago, the Philippines, Australia, Hawaii, Mexico, Peru, and the West Coast of the United States. Many Chinese went to these places as indentured workers to build railroads, work in canneries, mine for ore, farm, or fish. Some Chinese also went as craftsmen or merchants.

Douglas Lee, historian and Professor of Asian Studies:

Most of the immigrants were men; they didn't have families or women with them. And so, coming over here they had to have some sense of order. And in order to accomplish this, they established four kinds of organizations. One was the family association or clan association, which identified each person according to their family and helped provide kind of an artificial family with welfare needs like food, clothing, job references, and the like. Then there were district associations, which were aligned with native places: where you're from, like counties in China. But many times, because each county had its own dialect, they became also speech communities. And then there were secret societies. There were large ones that were more like fraternal organizations, and then there were smaller ones that were more like gangs or cliques.

Most of the Chinese still appreciate traditional Chinese language and culture in their families, but much of their attention is focused on adapting to and assimilating into the societies in which they live through language acquisition, through upward mobility, education, and jobs. This is very, very important for the development of a new identity amongst the overseas Chinese. (Douglas Lee, De Anza College, interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting, *Bridging World History, Unit 26: World History and Identity* [Oregon Public Broadcasting, Fall 2003].)

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Chinese American Mary Leong:

Originally my father and my mother were both born in Toisan, and they came from the village that was called Hoiyeen, which means Smoky River. When I was five years old my father says, 'You're five now, its time for you to go to Chinese school.' In those days we went to American school from about 8:30 to 2:30. We came home and had dinner; then from five to eight we went to Chinese school. So I went there from age five to age 16, and I actually graduated with a diploma. We had to read and write. We had to compose. We learned how to hold our brushes. We learned the history of China. We learned the customs of China. I'm born Chinese first—that's my heritage. And I'm very proud of being Chinese, but I'm proud of being Chinese American because I have the best of both worlds.

And I remember the first time I went back to China; I went to Beijing and Xian. I saw all the people, they were wearing the same color clothes—very drab blue—everybody on a bicycle. I went back 10 years later...completely changed. (Mary Leong, Chinese American, interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting, *Bridging World History, Unit 26: World History and Identity* [Oregon Public Broadcasting, Fall 2003].)

## Information on the Chechen Nationalists

The Chechens are an ethnic group seeking to create a national identity within their traditional homeland. Before the events of the late twentieth century, the identity of the Chechens had been tied to their extensive family affiliations and to their Islamic faith. But the changing face of the disintegrating Soviet Union linked the identity of many Chechens to another compelling influence: an emerging nationalism. The word Chechen comes from the Russian name for one of their villages, but Chechens call themselves "Nokhchi." They live in the northern Caucasus Mountains between Russia and Georgia. This area has been their homeland, according to archaeological evidence, for at least six thousand years. Historically, lowland Chechens have been grain farmers; those living in the highlands, shepherders. Their primary identity came from membership in small villages, where everyone knew everyone else. They were an independent people with their own language, culture, and territory, but no centralized government.

Chechen emigrant Ramzan Magomedov:

My name is Ramzan Magomedov. I was born in Chechnya in 1969. My predecessors—ancestors—have as far as I know always lived in Chechnya through generations. When I was eight, our family moved to Russia. That however didn't change my perception of who I am. I am Chechen and will remain so as long as I live. Wherever we go as people, one thing that is very important to us is to remain who we are and think of ourselves as Chechens first and foremost. As you go to different countries—as example coming to United States—does change a lot, of course, of how you think about yourself. But remaining Chechen is a big part of how I think about myself.

It was cold, it was really cold outside and there was a knock on the door. My grandmother opened the door and there was an officer and two soldiers who told her that she has 15 minutes to gather whatever she can—whatever she can carry. And take her child and be on that truck that is sitting out there, one of the trucks that was in the village, and they'll be taken to the city, and they are being deported—as they said—to Siberia. Of course, in actuality it was to Kyrgyztan and Kazakhstan, but to Chechens it really didn't make any difference at all. It was still deportation, a forceful deportation to a faraway land that they had no affiliation with at all. When my grandmother talked about it, I don't remember a single time when she didn't cry. Every time, even many, many years later, brought tremendous pain to her to remember those events. (Ramzan Magomedov, Chechen emigrant, interview with Oregon Public Broadcasting, *Bridging World History, Unit 26: World History and Identity* [Oregon Public Broadcasting, Fall 2003].)

Stalin deported the Chechens in 1944 as the final blow of an ongoing anti-religious campaign to vanquish Islam from communist Russia. Not all Chechens agree that the exile was as tragic an affair as Magomedov expresses, because many Chechen Muslims associate the exile with the birth of the Chechen fundamentalist Islam. The period of exile saw the emergence of a small sect, the Wahhab, or in Russian, Vakhhab. Like the Wahhabism of Saudi Arabia, this new Chechen sect was fundamentalist in nature. The Wahhabis were openly hostile to the Sufi sects, disagreeing with their moderation of the faith and their incorporation of pre-Muslim Chechen traditions. The Wah-

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habis advocated a return to what they called “true Islam,” and believed in the need to end Russian domination. As the Soviet Union fractured into separate nations including Georgia and Ukraine, some Chechens seized this opportunity for self-determination. In 1991, their nationalist president Dzhokhar Dudayev proclaimed Chechnya’s independence. Russians saw this proclamation as a threat to their future for two reasons: Chechnya’s prime location along the lines supplying most of Russia’s oil; and what Chechen independence would do to the stability of the Russian Federation. During this time, two sects—the Sufi Kunta Haji and the fundamentalist Wahhab—had become equally powerful within Chechnya. Each had hundreds of thousands of followers, but philosophically and religiously they were worlds apart. The Kunta Haji were pacifist and believed there might be some way to maintain their Chechen identity and still be affiliated with the Russian Federation. But the Wahhab believers were strongly in support of eliminating all Russian ties.

The Russian media began to portray Chechens as gangsters and thugs. This served to re-shape public perception of the Chechen identity, not only in Russia but also around the world. This persona paved the way for the invasion of Chechnya by the Russian Army in 1994. The Russian military assault forced many Chechens to reconsider their own identities: Were they citizens of Russia or of the Chechen Republic? Many Chechens embraced a newly-formed nationalist identity. They saw a complete break with Russia as a purely political and economic move, re-establishing an independent Chechen nation. Many Chechens, especially the hundreds of thousands living in refugee camps, still held on to their traditional family-centered communities. The question of how to define the Chechen identity in the twentieth century remains. Any one definition oversimplifies the complexities of Chechen religious, cultural, and national identities, and obscures the multi-layered tensions within Chechen society.

## ~~Activity 2: Globalization and Identity 60 minutes~~

~~Interview a classmate about his/her identity and how globalization may have changed it. Present your interview to the rest of the class. Analyze the group of sources your class created. Discuss how historians in the future might use these sources you created. What kinds of questions might they have about the reliability of your interviews?~~