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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
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Mind the Gap: Planting the Seeds of Cultural Awareness

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"We see things not as they but as we are." This paraphrased quote from the Talmud perfectly captures the idea of cultural lenses. Our surroundings, both natural and man-made, have added layers upon layers of assumptions that rise out of us as truths. The purpose of this unit is to prepare students for a unit where they enter the cultural neighborhoods of Chicago as ethnographers. In order to achieve some measure of objectivity as ethnographers, students must first try to identify the origins and reasons for their deeply held beliefs. This unit was written for an AP Human Geography course that addresses culture, religion, and identity. Through reading, thinking, discussing, and writing, students will begin to separate themselves, if only for a moment, from their kneejerk responses. In that space of separation, students will realize that all such understandings are chosen and can begin to choose that which fits with the person they want to be.

(Developed for AP Human Geography, grade 9; recommended for AP/Honors Human Geography, Global Issues, and Psychology/Sociology, High School grades)

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