



Imagining Ourselves Global Gathering Guide:
May, 2006: Culture and Conflict

This gathering guide gives you a set of tools, activities, and questions to engage your guests in intimate group conversations on the monthly themes that are highlighted in the *Imagining Ourselves* online exhibit and book. Come join the conversation whether you're with colleagues, family or friends. Remember that your attitude and preparation set the tone. Plan for a good time!

Background:

About *Imagining Ourselves: A New Generation of Women:*

Imagining Ourselves is a platform for young women to create positive change in their lives, communities and the world. The project reaches out to a generation of women – the one billion women between the ages of 20 and 40 - asking them to answer the question, “What defines your generation?” Launched on International Women’s Day, March 8, 2006, the *Imagining Ourselves* project includes:

- * A published anthology featuring the photography, painting, collage, poetry and essays from women all over the world with an introduction by world-renowned author, Isabel Allende.
- * An online exhibition, with multilingual, interactive options; and online educational curricula targeted for high schools and universities.
- * Global gatherings around the world including launch, community, and on-the-ground events featuring prominent women participants.

About the International Museum of Women: The mission of the International Museum of Women is to value the lives of women around the world. With the aim of helping to change values, attitudes and practices adverse to women’s well-being, the Museum illuminates women’s history, amplifies the voices and contributions of women, promotes awareness of women’s issues globally, and inspires action through history, art and cultural exchange.

Goals for Global Gatherings:

- ✍ To begin a global dialogue on experiences affecting women in their twenties and thirties.
- ✍ To share and articulate one's beliefs and attitudes with others around the globe, and learn what other women of the same age are thinking.
- ✍ To learn from the wisdom of older and younger generations.
- ✍ To be motivated to take action to address the challenges facing women and girls.
- ✍ To ... (additions from hosts and guests are welcomed)

Register: Join the online community www.imow.org to post your gathering in our list of *Imagining Ourselves* events, read about other gatherings, and communicate with your peers around the world.

Logistics: Guests want to be comfortable. Thus, details re: chairs/tables, cushions, food, beverages, potluck should be decided early. Also let your guests know how long the event will run. If you're taking pictures, let them know, and make sure they feel comfortable being photographed. Pictures are a great way to share your Global Gathering Event with others around the world.

Image or Prose selected from IO site www.imow.org Please respect our artists' by including their name, country, and title of piece when sharing their work.

Facilitation Tips and Exercises: Culture and Conflict

Facilitator Reminder:

The activities listed below are intended to serve as a guide. As a facilitator, you are encouraged to adjust or mold the activities to accommodate the interests of the group. Each Global Gathering Guide will provide you with two different activities and optional icebreakers. You may choose between topics, use both, or create your own. Reference material and additional information can be found in the Facilitator Notes for further insight into the topics. The main idea is that people gather together to discuss the issues/topics highlighted in each month of the *Imagining Ourselves* online exhibit and the corresponding chapters of the *Imagining Ourselves* book. We also encourage you to document the gathering. Please take notes and pictures during the event and share your experience online with the *Imagining Ourselves* community.

Materials:

- ? Computer with an Internet Connection (if possible), to display images and work
- ? Paper
- ? Pens/Pencils
- ? Comfortable location/space to have the discussion
- ? Camera, if possible. (Take photos to report back and share with other young women around the globe!)
- ? Copies of world map for each guest (*provided in Facilitator Notes*)
- ? Copies of artist's work and/or quote for participants to reference

Introduction:

(5 Minutes)

Introduce the *International Museum of Women, Imagining Ourselves* and yourself as facilitator of the workshop. Please reference the Background Information for a description of the museum and the *Imagining Ourselves* exhibit. Inform the group of the purpose of the gathering and the agenda. Following the basic introductions, allow participants to introduce themselves to the group so they feel comfortable engaging in an intimate conversation with each other. Facilitators may use icebreakers to get people involved and energized about the gathering.

Optional Icebreaker Activities:



- 1) If you choose to have a potluck, encourage participants to bring a dish and recipe that they most identify with. For example, bring a recipe from a region of world that most interests you or simply an old family recipe. As people introduce themselves to the group, they can talk about where the dish is from and why they identify and/or are interested in that culture. This is a great opportunity to exchange recipes.
- 2) Have people introduce themselves. Next, have them share one reason why they came to the gathering. Lastly, have them share three words that describe their response

to the expression “in between”.

Activity 1: “Between”

*“Being Part of two or more worlds.
Feeling not quite at home in either.
Being pressured to choose between them.
Deciding to create your own.”*

(-From the Introduction to Part Three of the *Imagining Ourselves* Anthology, titled, “Between”)

This discussion is about the experience of being “between” cultures and identities—an experience shared by many of today’s young women. To start off the discussion, the facilitator will read a quote from artist and *Imagining Ourselves* contributor Rania Farouk Shalaby from Egypt.

“A defining element of my generation is the melding of cultural identities. Compared with past generations, my generation is more aware of and influenced by international trends, events and fashions. As a result, we tend to look outward for challenges and opportunities and entertainment- seeking a global rather than local community. We are cultural extroverts.”



Have a discussion about this quote. In what ways are we influenced by international trends? How might we see ourselves as “cultural extroverts”? Why else might we look outward? For example, some people have no choice and have to look outward because they are forced to live in exile. What might be the luxuries, burdens or responsibilities of being a “cultural extrovert”?

Following this discussion, break the larger group into smaller groups of three or four. This next exercise will allow the group to compare and contrast Shalaby’s quote with another *Imagining Ourselves* anthology contributor and artist, Farheen Haq (Canada/Pakistan). The facilitator is encouraged to provide a copy of this next quote for each participant.

“As a South Asian Canadian woman of Muslim heritage, my life is comprised of many intersections and many identities which are constantly negotiated and renegotiated. Living in this global world, more and more people are caught in the web of global intersections and this seemingly warm notion of a “global village” is in fact very complex and destabilizing. What does it mean to be from a particular culture? What is culture? How do we begin to define ourselves or understand ourselves in this context of globalization? These are types of questions that my art investigates” (Farheen Haq).



Haq's work specifically speaks to the experience of being "in between" and intersections of identities. In what ways do or don't you identify as being "in between", meaning in between politics, language, cultures, religion, gender etc...? How does this effect the way in which you interact with the world around you? Which artist most defines your view of being "in between"? Finally, how do you deal with people who are different from you?

Topic Facts:

- 1) 175 million people (3 percent of the world's population) resided outside their country of birth as of 2001, 20 million of this 175 million were refugees. Women and children constitute some 80 percent of the world's millions of refugees and other displaced persons, including internally displaced persons (*Imagining Ourselves* 2005).
- 2) The 11.3 million (or 57 percent) increase, from 19.8 million in 1990 to 31.1 million in 2000, is also without precedent in our history, both numerically and proportionately. Even during the great wave of immigration from 1900 to 1910, the foreign-born population grew by only 3.2 million (or 31 percent), from 10.3 million to 13.5 million (Center for Immigration Studies, www.cis.org/articles/2002/censuspr.html).

Activity 2: Identity and Conflict

This activity is designed to explore and discuss the theme of identity and conflict locally and globally. The purpose of the activity is to create global understanding and increase awareness around the relationship between identity and conflict. Before starting the activity, share information regarding contemporary international conflicts to engage participants in the topic. Basic information about the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia is provided under Topic Facts. You may do additional research on the designated countries or different countries.

To start off the activity divide the group into two smaller groups. One group will be given a poem written by *Imagining Ourselves* anthology contributor Alexandra Djajic-Horvath (from Bosnia and Herzegovina) along with her biography and country information. The other group will be given a selected piece from the May, 2006 Culture and Conflict theme of the *Imagining Ourselves* virtual exhibit along with the artist's bio and country information. As facilitator, you have the freedom to select the artist and piece most appropriate for the topic from the virtual exhibit.

It is important that each group has a copy of the artist's work, biography and information about her experience/views on identity and conflict. It is also encouraged to provide each group with additional background information/history of the conflict highlighted by the artist.

Ask each group to discuss the following questions among themselves:

What is most striking about the piece?
What do you think the artist is saying about identity and conflict?

Once the two groups have finished, have them present the art and artist to the other group. Encourage them to share what they discussed and learned about identity and conflict in a different country.



Artist/Piece Information: Alexandra Djajic-Horvath from Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Alexandra Djajic-Horvath (Bosnia and Herzegovina) was born in 1966 in Sarajevo and lived for many years in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but with the outbreak of the war she moved to Novi Sad, Yugoslavia. In 1999, during the NATO bombing campaign, she left that country and moved to Budapest. Since 2001, Aleksandra has been living with her husband in Florence. She has published poems in English and Serbian literary magazines.

First Morning in Exile

By Alexandra Djajic-Horvath

The first morning in exile
It all happened very quickly:
Buying a place ticket
going to the airport
a charter that was late
a three-hour flight.
And then-
A passport officer
Confirms my identity
not exactly with goodwill and speed
(in my passport
Destroyed cities lurk
And he simply cannot
so early in the morning
on an empty stomach...)
His well-fed sleepy fingers
Hunt for me through the circuits
of the invisible powerful net
but my face does not appear-
I am still not on the list of those
who want to blow up the world
and after a long search
-resigned and tired
From the night shift
And last night's beer-
he lets me slip into
his blessed world
of short espresso
short memory
and long sound sleep.

Topic Facts:

Bosnia and Herzegovina

- 1) Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from the former Yugoslavia on 3 March 1992 ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wor;d/europe/country_profiles](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles)).
- 2) The Bosnian Serbs, supported by Serbia, responded with armed resistance aimed at partitioning the republic along ethnic lines and joining Serb-held areas to form a "Greater Serbia" (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wor;d/europe/country_profiles).
- 3) The use of gender-based violence, including rape and forced pregnancy, is increasingly a horrifying feature of war in ethnic conflicts. Estimates of the number of women raped as part of a deliberate pattern of abuse in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina vary from 20,000 to 50,000 (UNIFEM, www.unifem.org/news_events/story_detail.php?StoryID=180).

Rwanda

- 1) Between April and July 1994, Rwanda was the site of a horrifying litany of human rights abuses - mass killings of unarmed civilians, rape and numerous other acts of torture (*Women of Rwanda: Marked for Death, Amnesty International 2004*). <http://web.amnesty.org/actforwomen/rwa-070404-action-eng>
- 2) The United Nations estimates that between 250,000 and 500,000 rapes were committed during the genocide. Degradation was integral to the physical violence, with some women being made to parade naked or perform various humiliating acts at the bidding of soldiers and militia (*Women of Rwanda: Marked for Death, Amnesty International 2004*).
- 3) Compounding the trauma of being victims and witnesses of horrendous brutality, many women raped during 1994 now suffer the reality of living with sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS with little hope of legal recourse, medical care or compensation (*Women of Rwanda: Marked for Death, Amnesty International 2004*).

Activity 3: Thematic Questions for “Between” Discussions

1. How do war and immigration fit into the conversation of “Between” or “Generation”?
2. What defines home? (time permitting create a collage of home)
3. Where do pressures “to choose” begin: society, family, religion...?
4. Describe your first venture into creating your own identity or how do you envision your life’s “first act”?

Wrap Up:

- ✍ Have your group share what they learned, and what may have surprised them about the conversation.
- ✍ Identify Next Steps: Based on what was learned or observed in the discussion, what might your group do to contribute to positive change in their own lives, in their communities, or on a global level?
- ✍ Share resources: Encourage your guests to get involved with community organizations to guide/support other women, especially on themes related to the topic of Culture and Conflict. Below are a few suggestions, but feel free to provide your own local examples.

Resources on Women and Peacemaking:

- ? Amnesty International Women's Human Rights www.amnesty.org
- ? International Forum on Reconciliation, Women Peacemakers Program (WPP)
www.ifor.org
- ? United Nations Development Fund for Women www.unifem.org
- ? Women's Institute for Leadership Development for
www.wildforhumanrights.org
- ? Vital Voices Global Partnership www.vitalvoices.org
- ? Fair Fund www.fairfund.org

Report Back:

IMPORTANT—Please take the time to log on to the *Imagining Ourselves* online exhibit, and create a short report about your gathering on our events pages. It only takes a few minutes, and it’s important to share your thoughts with other young women around the world who are eager to learn from you! (This is separate—and possibly more important—than the evaluation form that follows, which is simply helpful feedback for us to improve our future gatherings.)



Evaluation of Global Gathering:

(Handing this form to your guests for additional feedback will help us improve our future gatherings. Responses can be mailed to: Gatherings, c/o International Museum of Women, PO Box 190038, San Francisco, CA 94119, USA)

Date of Gathering: _____

Location of Gathering: _____

Number of People at Gathering: _____

Please briefly answer the following questions:

1) Did you learn anything new from the discussion, and if so, what? Was there anything surprising that came up in the conversation?

2) Have you left the discussion (or participation in the *Imagining Ourselves* project in general) with any new ideas that could be applied to your own life or community?

3) What suggestions or constructive criticism would you have for the organizers of your gathering, or for the organizers of the *Imagining Ourselves* project?