GENTRIFICATION
WHEN DID YOU BECOME GAY?
APPROPRIATION VS. APPRECIATION
WELFARE   WHITE PRIDE
WHAT ARE YOU?
MODEL MINORITY
RACE CARD
CODE WORDS
FEMINISM

WHAT I HEAR WHEN YOU SAY

VIEWING GUIDE

WHAT ARE YOU?

AN INTRODUCTION TO
WHAT I HEAR WHEN YOU SAY

Deeply ingrained in human nature is a tendency to organize, classify, and categorize our complex world. Often, this is a good thing. This ability helps us make sense of our environment and navigate unfamiliar landscapes while keeping us from being overwhelmed by the constant stream of new information and experiences.

When we apply this same impulse to social interactions, however, it can be, at best, reductive and, at worst, dangerous. Seeing each other through the lens of labels and stereotypes prevents us from making authentic connections and understanding each other's experiences.

Through the initiative, What I Hear When You Say (WIHWYS), we explore how words can both divide and unite us and learn more about the complex and everchanging ways that language shapes our expectations, opportunities, and social privilege. WIHWYS 's interactive multimedia resources challenge what we think we know about race, class, gender, and identity, and provide a dynamic digital space where we can raise difficult questions, discuss new ideas, and share fresh perspectives.

WHAT ARE YOU?

> " When someone asks me 'what are you' I think what they're really trying to say is… you need to help me label you, so I feel comfortable.

Kate Rigg, Comedian

What's the intent behind a simple question like, "What are you?" Join Actor, Comedian, and Writer, Kate Rigg; Professor, Ann Morning; and Journalist, Documentarian, and Executive Producer, Soledad O'Brien as they share their own stories about living within intersecting identities and explore how we perceive (and count) who belongs.

▶ **Watch the full episode** "What Are You?"
pbs.org/what-i-hear/web-series/what-are-you

A QUICK LOOK AT WHO WE ARE

- As the language related to race evolves, we gain a more nuanced understanding of the U.S. population: In 1960, 88.6% of Americans identified as White, 10.5% as Black, and less than 1% as other. In 2010, 75% of Americans identified as White, (either alone, or in combination with one or more other races), 13% as Black, 16% as Latino, and 5.6% as Asian.[1][2][3][4][5]
- U.S. Census projections show that multicultural populations will become the numeric majority by year 2044 and by the year 2020 for U.S. Children.[6]
- According to a 2015 Pew Research Center survey, 25% of mixed-race adults say people are "often or sometimes confused by their racial background". And 19% say they felt like they were "a bridge between different racial groups".[7]

DIG DEEPER | THE U.S. CENSUS AND AMERICAN IDENTITY

> " When the census and all kinds of official forms change the categories, millions of people automatically get their race changed over night… It really has everything to do with how we count and how we choose to identify ourselves.
>
> Ann Morning, Professor

The United States has been grappling with the question, "What are you?" for over 200 years.

In 1790, Secretary of State, Thomas Jefferson, created the first U.S. census to assemble an official count of the country's population.[8] In addition to gathering basic data--age, gender, place of residence, etc.-- the 3.9 million inhabitants of this newly formed country were asked to define themselves according to one of the following five categories [9]:

- Free White male of 16 years and upward
- Free White male under 16 years
- Free White female
- All other free persons
- Slave

The selection of these categories reveals almost as much about the nation and its priorities as the data they collected. Through this census, we get a glimpse of a fledgling country defined by an idea of Whiteness, reliant on an economy of chattel slavery, and concerned about the nation's economic and military potential.[10] We also begin to understand how the language used in the census reinforced social status and shaped access to economic and political rights and privileges.

WHAT CHANGED?

The methods and language used to ask, "What are you?" in the U.S. Census have changed and expanded in response to shifting political, economic, and social priorities.

Prior to 1970, people could not self-determine their own race.[11] Census-takers would go door-to-door to collect data and were instructed to complete the "race" or "color" category by 'observation'.[12] For Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, or other persons of Latinx descent, this meant they would be classified as ''White'' unless they were definitively perceived as "Negro," "Indian," or "some other race".[13] As a result, the scope of the Latinx and Hispanic populations was concealed for decades, and the community's participation in U.S. society before 1970 has been, at least partially, erased.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

The modern census continues to raise questions about who should be included, and how we classify each other and ourselves.

When the option to select more than one racial group was introduced in 2000, many civil rights advocates protested. Although this new option would help to reveal the extent to which the U.S. population is mixed-race, there was also concern that this data would "dilute" the demographics of Black and Latinx communities and weaken institutional safeguards implemented to combat racial injustice.[14]

In 2017, proposals to introduce a category for "Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity" in the 2020 census were withdrawn, raising concerns about the ongoing lack of data on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, etc. (LGBTQIA+).[15] The Census Bureau's director at the time, John Thompson, stated, "Our review concluded there was no federal data need to change the planned census and [American Community Survey] subjects."[16] LGBTQIA+ advocates and service providers argue that the community's exclusion compromises their access to constitutionally guaranteed rights and services and diminishes their political voice.[17] [18]

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

An accurate and comprehensive census is mandated in Article One, Section II of the United States Constitution, and the process is critical because it has a direct impact on the political and economic well-being of the community. Census data helps to determine the number of seats each state has in the U.S. House of Representatives and how federal resources for services such as education, affordable housing, job training, social services, infrastructure, and other community projects are allocated. In order to count, we need to be counted.

Learn more about the United States Census:

United States Census Bureau: https://www.census.gov/

Pew Research Center: http://www.pewresearch.org/topics/u-s-census/

Hear different perspectives on the Topic, "What Are You?"
pbs.org/what-i-hear/topics/what-are-you

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT

- What do people mean when they ask, "What are you?"
- Have you ever had someone ask you that question? What do you think they wanted to know? How did you respond? (Have you ever asked someone else that question? If so, what motivated you? What did you want to know? How did the person respond?)
- How do identity labels inform how we interact with each other?
- What does it mean to "take back your voice"? How can we amplify the voices of marginalized communities?
- If you were curious to learn more about someone, how could you reframe or replace the question, "What Are You?"

LEARN MORE

TWO SPIRITS

http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/two-spirits/

Two Spirits explores the life and murder of a Navajo boy who was also a girl.

LITTLE WHITE LIE

http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/little-white-lie/

Documentary filmmaker, Lacey Schwartz's personal story about dual identity, race and the legacy of family secrets, denial, and redemption.

KUMU HINA

http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/films/kumu-hina/

The story of Hina WongKalu, a transgender native Hawaiian teacher and cultural icon who brings to life Hawaii's longheld embrace of mahu—those who embody both male and female spirit.

VOICES FROM THE EPISODE | WHAT ARE YOU?

Kate Rigg
Comedian & Writer

Recurring actor on Law and Order and Family Guy

Has attended Montreal Just for Laughs Festival, the Toyota Comedy Festival and The Marshalls Women in Comedy Festival

Co-creator and executive producer of the reality competition "Dance Your A** Off"

Activist and inspirational speaker for underrepresented youth, women's rights Mixed race and Asian American causes.

Ann Morning
Professor

Associate Professor of Sociology at NYU

Member of U.S. Census Committee

Popularized concept of transracial identity in Dolezal/NAACP controversy

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Soledad O'Brien
Journalist, Documentarian & Executive Producer

Anchor and producer for NBC, CNN & HBO

Founder of Starfish Media Group

NABJ's Journalist of the Year

Awarded multiple Emmy, Peabody, and Alfred I. duPont awards

Visit **pbs.org/whatihear** for a detailed Viewing Guide on every topic.

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