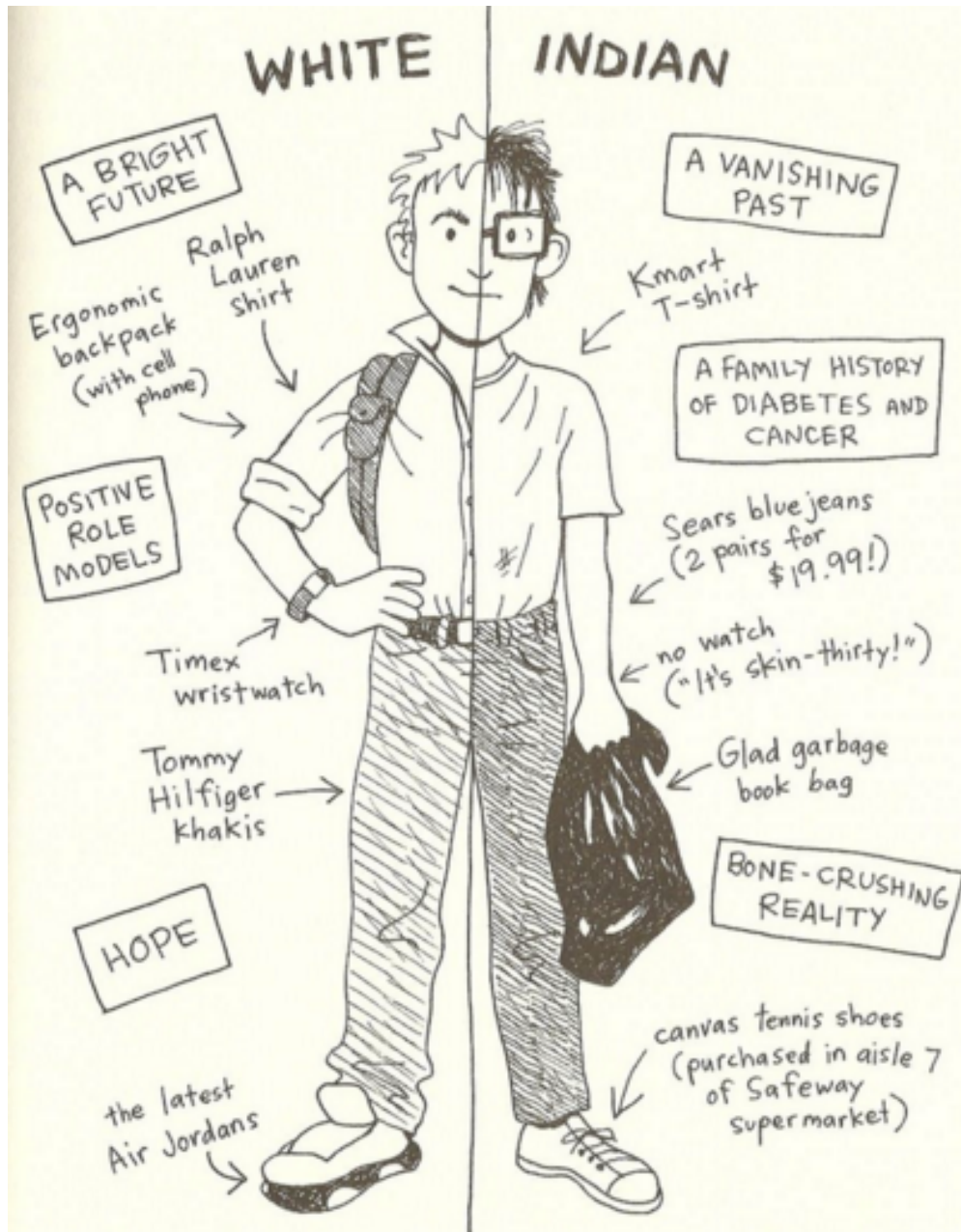


Dual-Identity Classroom Activity

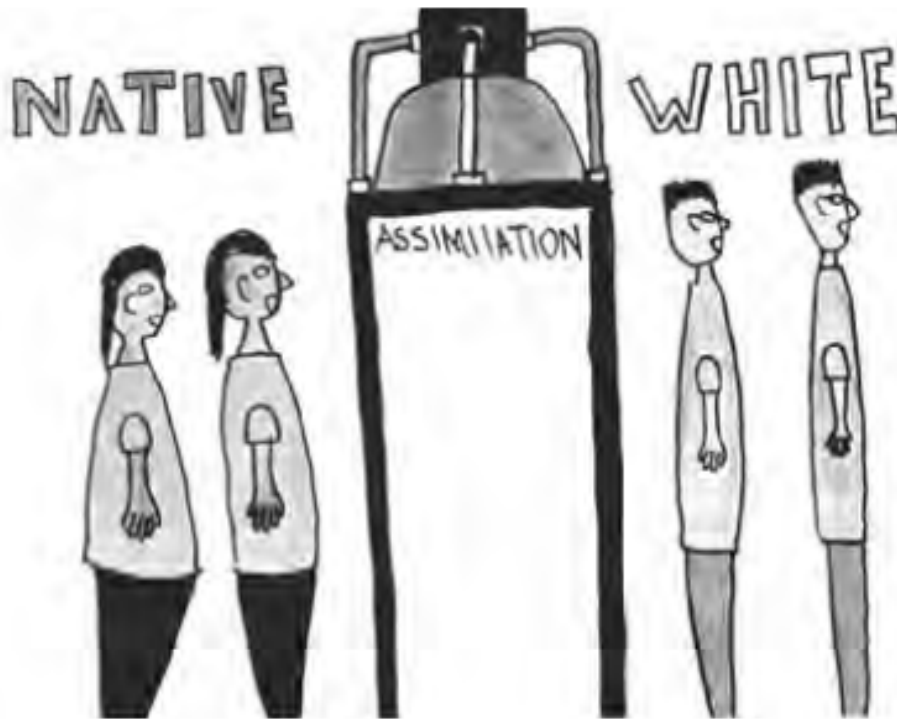
In an illustration by Ellen Forney from Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, the main character in the book, Arnold/Junior, is seen with a line drawn down the middle of his body.



From *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007, p. 57) by Sherman Alexie, illustration by Ellen Forney.

As you can see, the left side is labeled “white” and drawn and labeled with “appropriate” characteristics. The right side is labeled “Indian.”

In the image below, a high school student in Linda Christensen's classroom visually depicts the process of "assimilation." In this image, assimilation appears to be a process of leaving behind one's language, culture, and other beliefs/traditions in order to "fit in."



From *Teaching for Joy and Justice* (2009, p. 215) by Linda Christensen.

Take a few moments to discuss the following questions:

1. What are your thoughts on the drawings?
2. Can anyone relate to the dual nature that Junior presents in his drawing?
Can anyone relate to what is depicted about the process of assimilation?
3. What do some of words surrounding the image (e.g., "hope") of Junior say about the nature of his identity?
4. What do the images say about the climate and context in which individuals in the United States attempt to form their personal identities?

Drawing the Dual Identity

After thinking about the above questions, you will have an opportunity to re-create the drawings using your own lived experience. In your own life, think about areas of your life where you might feel split in similar ways. Your images might illustrate racial, cultural, geographic, or religious differences, or issues relate to health, body type, personal interests, or differences in personal characteristics

such as that of “half obedient child” and “half rebellious teenager.” You may split your drawings in more than two ways. In addition to your drawing, you should be commenting on the drawings as Junior has in his drawing.

You should use the drawing of Junior as a guide for your art. Think of things like clothing, accessories, thought and word bubbles, color, hairstyle, etc. Artistically, you can get as creative as you would like! You may use paint, markers, crayons, colored pencil, or even choose to use no color at all (if you feel that fits your identity construction). However, please make sure you clearly label all identity attributes just as Junior does in his drawings.

Written Response

Based on your drawing, spend some time free writing about what it feels like to “walk in two or more worlds” at once.

- How do these identities synchronize, clash, or something else?
- How do these differences impact decision making, such as deciding what is the right or wrong thing to do?

Based on an activity from the NCTE Publication “Sherman Alexie in the Classroom.”