

Reflections

MATTERS OF RACE tells a variety of stories, some familiar and some not.

- Which stories did you find most memorable? What qualities set those stories apart? Which stories surprised you? Which did you find disturbing?
- What do the stories have in common? What does each reveal about “matters of race”? How has each challenged your ideas about race and racism?
- What did you learn from the series about race? About yourself and the way you view the world?
- What did you learn from the series about what it means to be an American?

Discuss your observations with friends and classmates. Was everyone struck by the same stories? How do you account for differences?



Brief biographies of the filmmakers begin on page 3. If you were to meet them, what questions would you ask them? What would you like them to know about your stories, your experiences with race?



Actor and playwright Anna Deavere Smith believes that we can learn a lot about a person “in the very moment that language fails them.” In which films do we see moments when “language fails”? What do those moments reveal? How do they help us see the individual beyond the stereotypes?



Director Martin Scorsese once told film critic Gene Siskel about the concept of a “master image”—one frame that can summarize an entire film. What image summarizes each of the films you watched? Share your ideas with your classmates. How similar are the choices each of you made? How do you account for differences?



Revise the working definitions of race and racism that you began in the PreView section to reflect what you learned from the film and your discussions about it. How does race and racism both shape and misshape communities today? How can we begin to bridge the divide within communities to create a civil society that respects and values all of its citizens?

For Further Reading

Facing History and Ourselves. *Race and Membership in American History: The Eugenics Movement*. Facing History and Ourselves, 2002.

Lazarre, Jane. *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*. Duke University Press, 1996.

Liu, Eric. *The Accidental Asian: Notes of a Native Speaker*. Random House, 1999.

Martinez, Ruben. *Crossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail*. Picador, 2002.

Senna, Danzy. *Caucasia*. Penguin Putnam, 1999.

Wideman, John Edgar. *Fatheralong: A Meditation on Fathers and Sons, Race and Society*. Random House, 1995.