



# CHOOSING TO PARTICIPATE

A poster exhibit to encourage  
dialogue, engagement, respect,  
and participation in our  
communities

In an increasingly interconnected world, it is more important than ever to inspire people of all ages to create positive social change. All are encouraged to consider the consequences of our everyday choices—to discover how “little things are big”—and to make a difference in their own communities.



Developed by Facing  
History and Ourselves and  
the Smithsonian Institution  
Traveling Exhibition Service

Local context added  
by Howard County  
Library System

This exhibit will walk you through what it means to be an Upstander: someone who chooses dialogue over silence, respect over division, and action over inaction. Together, we can shape a kinder, stronger Howard County!

**HEY, HOWARD COUNTY!**  
The *Choosing to Participate*  
exhibit challenges each of us  
to think deeply about how we  
can make a difference through  
personal or collective action.



# THINGS HAPPEN HERE

## 81 HATE BIAS INCIDENT\* REPORTS IN 2023

### Top Three Bias Motivation Categories

**60.5%**

**Race, Ethnicity,  
and/or Ancestry**

71.4% Black  
16.3% Asian  
4.1% Hispanic or Latino  
4.1% Arab

**24.7%**

**Religion**

75% Jewish  
25% Muslim

**11.1%**

**Sexual  
Orientation**

**“About a year ago I witnessed a man yelling** at an Asian woman over her ethnicity. This occurred right in the heart of the Covid-19 pandemic, when Anti-Asian hate was occurring in record numbers. I am not sure how this incident got started but it ended quickly with the victim running away and the man walking the other way.

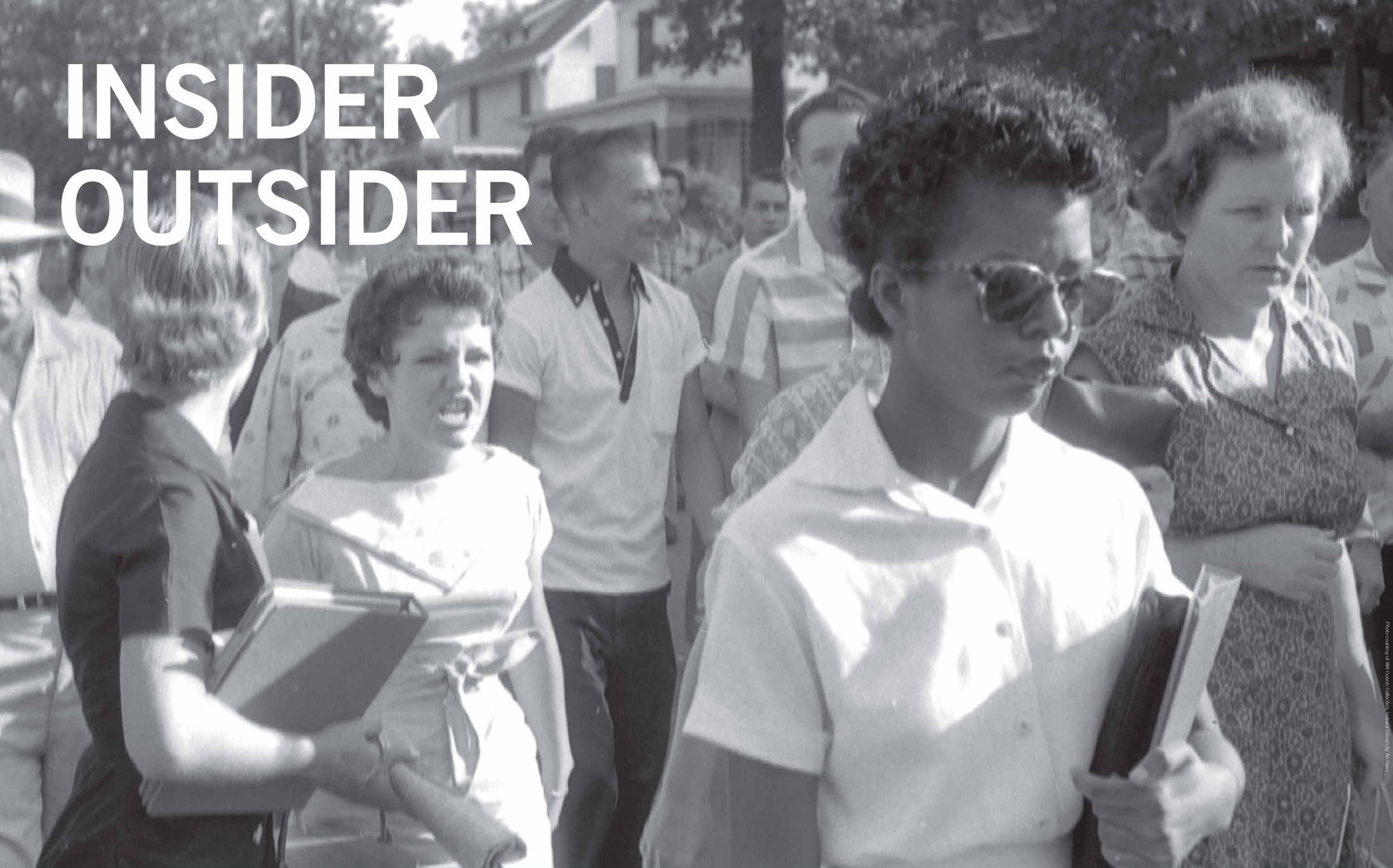
No one stepped in to defend this poor woman as people should do. People, me included, begin to question whether we should step in and get involved or simply walk away. I felt horrible for this woman because in this man’s eyes she was entirely to blame for this pandemic. This event stuck with me. I did not get involved but I probably should have tried to help.”

*—Howard County resident*  
HCLS Brave Stories Project

**\* A Hate Bias Incident** is any form of hostile expression, language, or behavior that may be motivated by another person’s race, color, disability, religion, national origin, or gender identity. Although they are offensive, they are not illegal. Participation can be individual or collective.



# INSIDER OUTSIDER



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**“And you’ve got to know the person in front of you is not a problem to be solved, but a wonder that will never be gotten to the bottom of.”**

**–David Brooks**

“Growing up in Hoco I saw a lot of interracial friend groups and it never seemed to be a big issue in school. Recently while at TU, I overheard a group of (white) girls in class talking with this one girl who was from the Middle East.

They were asking her about her life before she moved here, how to properly pronounce her name, etc. and they seemed genuinely interested in learning. While I never noticed race playing a big impact throughout HCPSS, I also never noticed people going out of their way to learn more about someone’s background and be respectful about it.”

*–Howard County resident*  
HCLS Brave Stories Project



# DO SOMETHING DO NOTHING



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# DO SOMETHING

**"LITTLE  
THINGS  
ARE BIG."**

**Small actions that add up to collective action like signing a petition or voting.**

"A developer bought 3 houses in our neighborhood and was intent upon making a Dairy Queen in our residential area. Our entire neighborhood, very diverse, came together to petition against it and stopped the developer from going through with this plan. Many did not speak each other's language but that did not stop us from working together."

*—Howard County resident*  
HCLS Brave Stories Project

**Small actions that make an individual difference like interrupting a racist joke or standing up to a bully.**

"I was helping a friend with a real estate transaction. The conference table was clearly divided by color as were the conversations. The separation by color came up in a friendly manner after which people moved around the table and engaged in conversations without regard to color."

*—Howard County resident*  
HCLS Brave Stories Project



# US



# THEM



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# THEM



# US



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# ARE YOU AN “US”

Use the identity wheel to plot *your* identities.

Because we are not simply one identity, we all experience different aspects of life as an “Us” and a “Them.” This means we each know what it feels like to be an outsider in some aspect of our lives. It also means we each have the building blocks for empathy—the first step toward action.

# OR A “THEM?”



IDENTITY WHEEL



# » CHOOSE DIALOGUE

EVERYONE  
HAS A STORY

How does sharing  
stories help build an  
inclusive community?

In 1979, 14-year-old Arn Chorn, a survivor of the Cambodian genocide, stumbled into a refugee camp on the border of Cambodia and Thailand. A year after his adoption by a United Nations volunteer, Arn was a high school student in rural New Hampshire, struggling to fit in. Today he uses his voice to engage people across the globe in peace and non-violence.

“This is very different from having power with guns. I feel power just standing there and talking for the first time.”

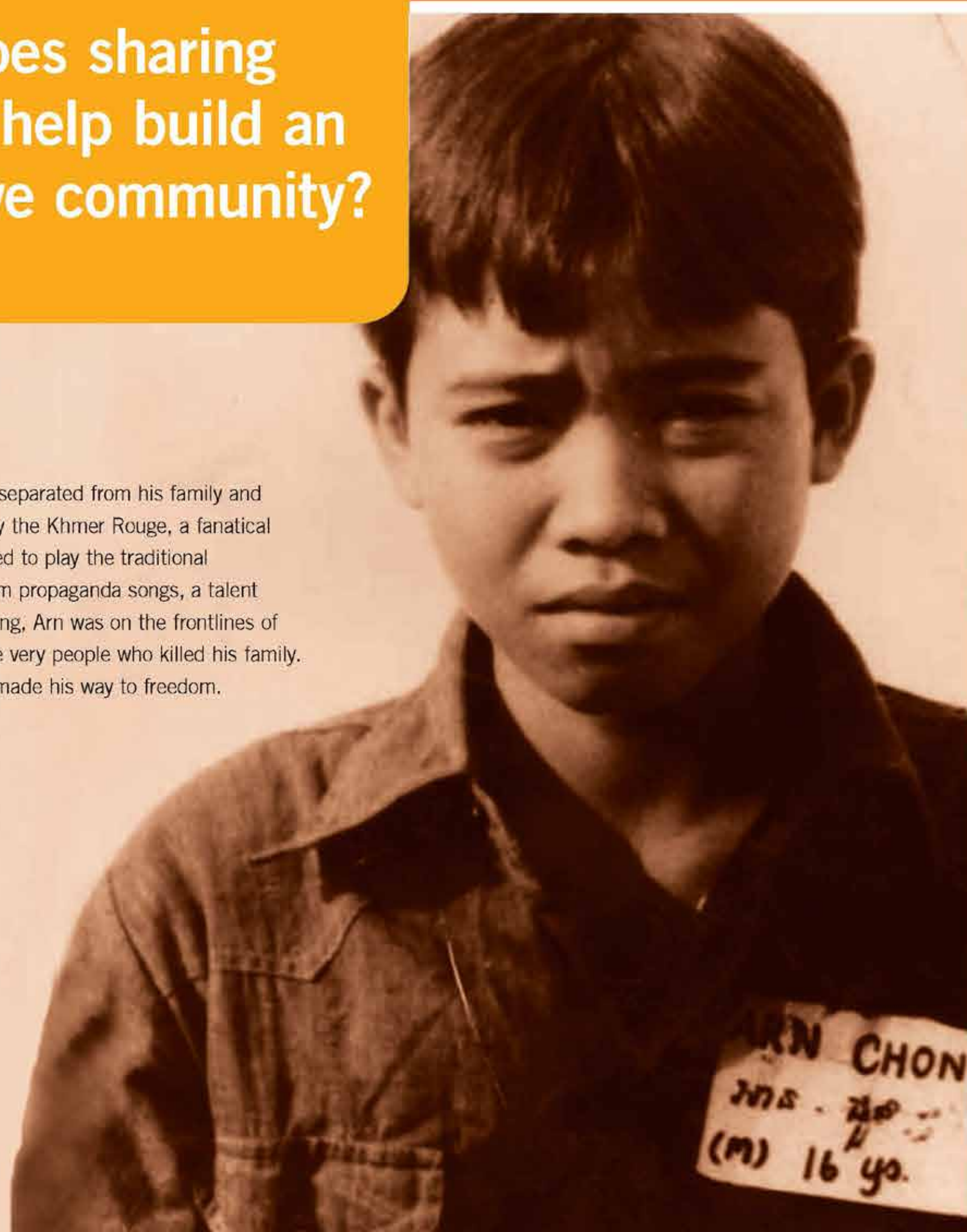
Arn Chorn Pond

“He told us about the suffering he went through . . . He wasn’t a stranger any more after you heard what he had to say . . .”

Boston high school student

From language difficulties to cultural differences, adjusting to life in America was a challenge. While some classmates tried to reach out, others ignored or made fun of him. Gradually, with help from his parents and teachers, Arn began to speak publicly about his experiences and the importance of sharing stories with one another. He has founded several human rights organizations dedicated to rebuilding hope and spreading peace throughout the world.

At the age of nine, Arn was separated from his family and taken to a work camp run by the Khmer Rouge, a fanatical communist group. He learned to play the traditional Cambodian flute and perform propaganda songs, a talent that saved his life. Before long, Arn was on the frontlines of battle, forced to fight for the very people who killed his family. Eventually he escaped and made his way to freedom.

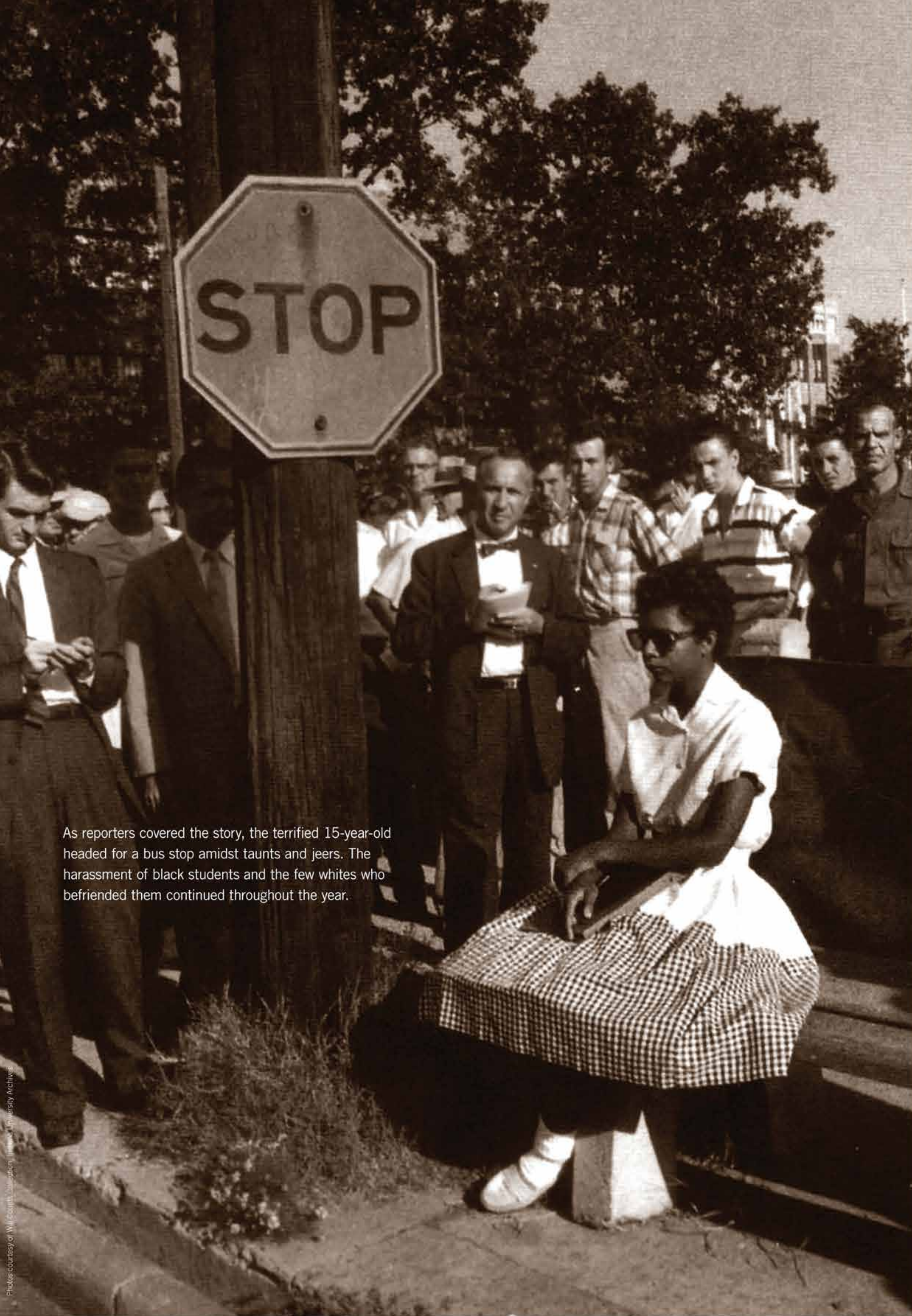


Arn's engagement with young people often incorporates his boyhood love of music. Preserving Cambodian traditions is one focus of his humanitarian efforts.



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As reporters covered the story, the terrified 15-year-old headed for a bus stop amidst taunts and jeers. The harassment of black students and the few whites who befriended them continued throughout the year.

# » CHOOSE RESPECT

CRISIS  
IN LITTLE  
ROCK

Who is in your  
universe of  
responsibility?

In 1957, nine African American students were accepted for enrollment to integrate Central High, one of three all-white high schools in Little Rock, Arkansas. For 17 days that September, the Arkansas National Guard kept the “Little Rock Nine” from entering the school, but did nothing to disperse the crowd of angry whites gathered outside. Riveted to their television sets, Americans nationwide watched the crisis unfold. Finally, President Dwight Eisenhower sent 1,200 soldiers to Little Rock to protect the African American students and restore order. The next year, the three integrated high schools were closed.

(below left)

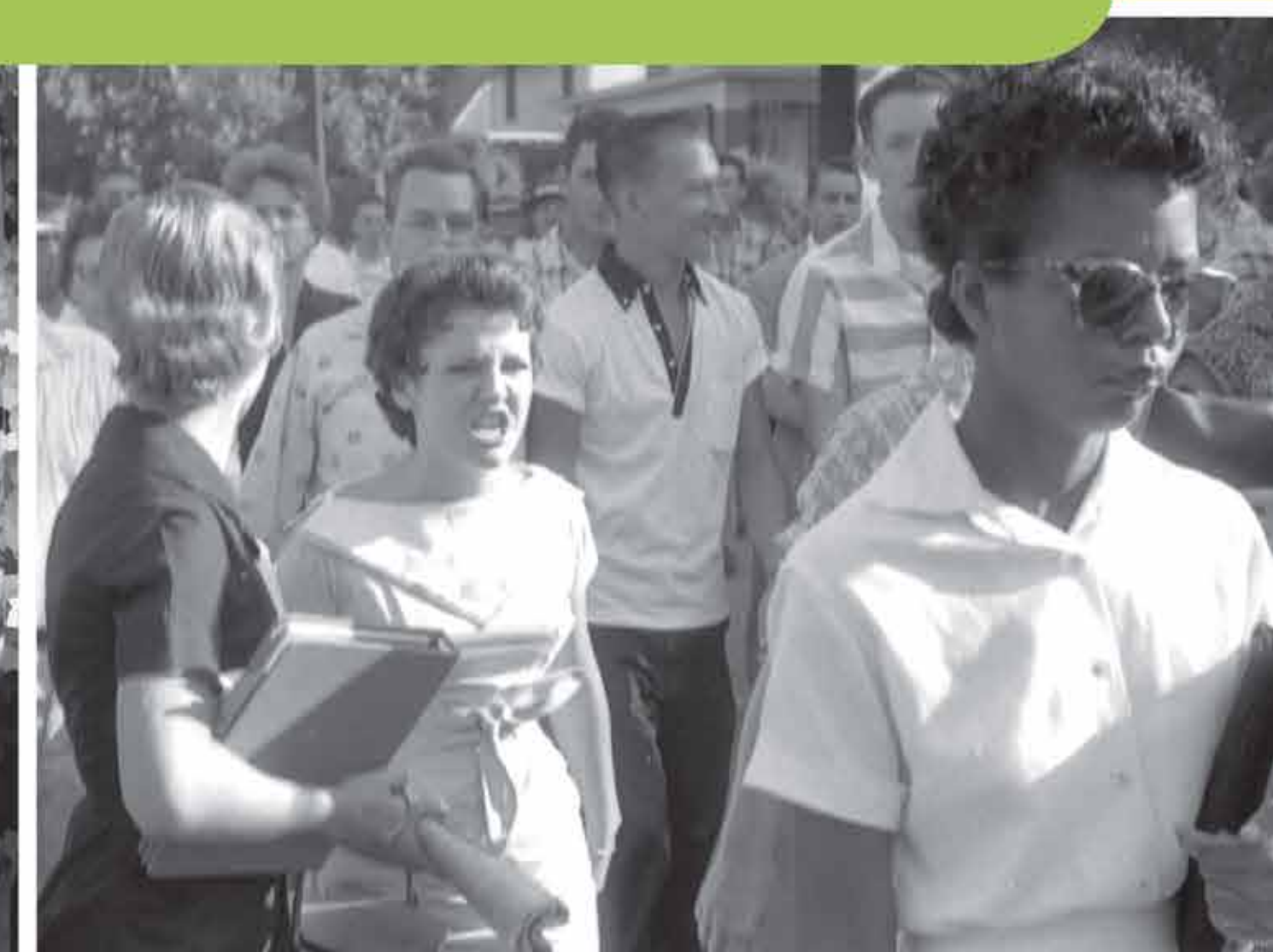
The Arkansas National Guard formed a human fence to keep the students out of the school.

(below right)

When Eckford reached Central High, she found herself surrounded by a mob of angry students, some of whom she had known since she was 10 years old.

“I remember this tremendous feeling of being alone, and I didn’t know how I was going to get out of there. I didn’t know whether I would be injured. There was this deafening roar. I could hear individual voices, but I was not conscious of numbers. I was conscious of being alone.”

Elizabeth Eckford, one of the Little Rock Nine



Smithsonian  
Institution



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Are you someone  
who speaks out?

Do you take a  
positive stand on  
behalf of others?

Are you an  
upstander?

Or are you a  
bystander?

# HOW WILL YOU CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE?



“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful  
committed citizens can change the world. Indeed,  
it is the only thing that ever has.”

Margaret Mead (1901-1978), anthropologist



“The world is too dangerous to live in—  
not because of the people who do evil, but  
because of the people who sit and let it  
happen.”

Albert Einstein (1879-1955), scientist

Do you make  
the world a better  
place?



Facing History and Ourselves ([www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org)) is an educational organization whose mission is to engage students in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service ([www.sites.si.edu](http://www.sites.si.edu)) creates tangible connections to the Institution through traveling and virtual exhibits that present the full breadth of Smithsonian scholarly and collection resources that engage, educate, and inspire. Special thanks to the Walmart Foundation ([www.walmartfoundation.org](http://www.walmartfoundation.org)), the National Sponsor of *Choosing to Participate*.



# » CHOOSE ENGAGEMENT

LITTLE THINGS ARE BIG

In the 1950s, segregation and ideas about “race” shaped the way Americans in all parts of the nation saw one another as well as the way they saw themselves. As writer Jesús Colón discovered on a subway ride in New York City, those ideas also influenced the choices people made.

**Has there ever been a time when your “gut instinct” told you to act but you didn’t?**

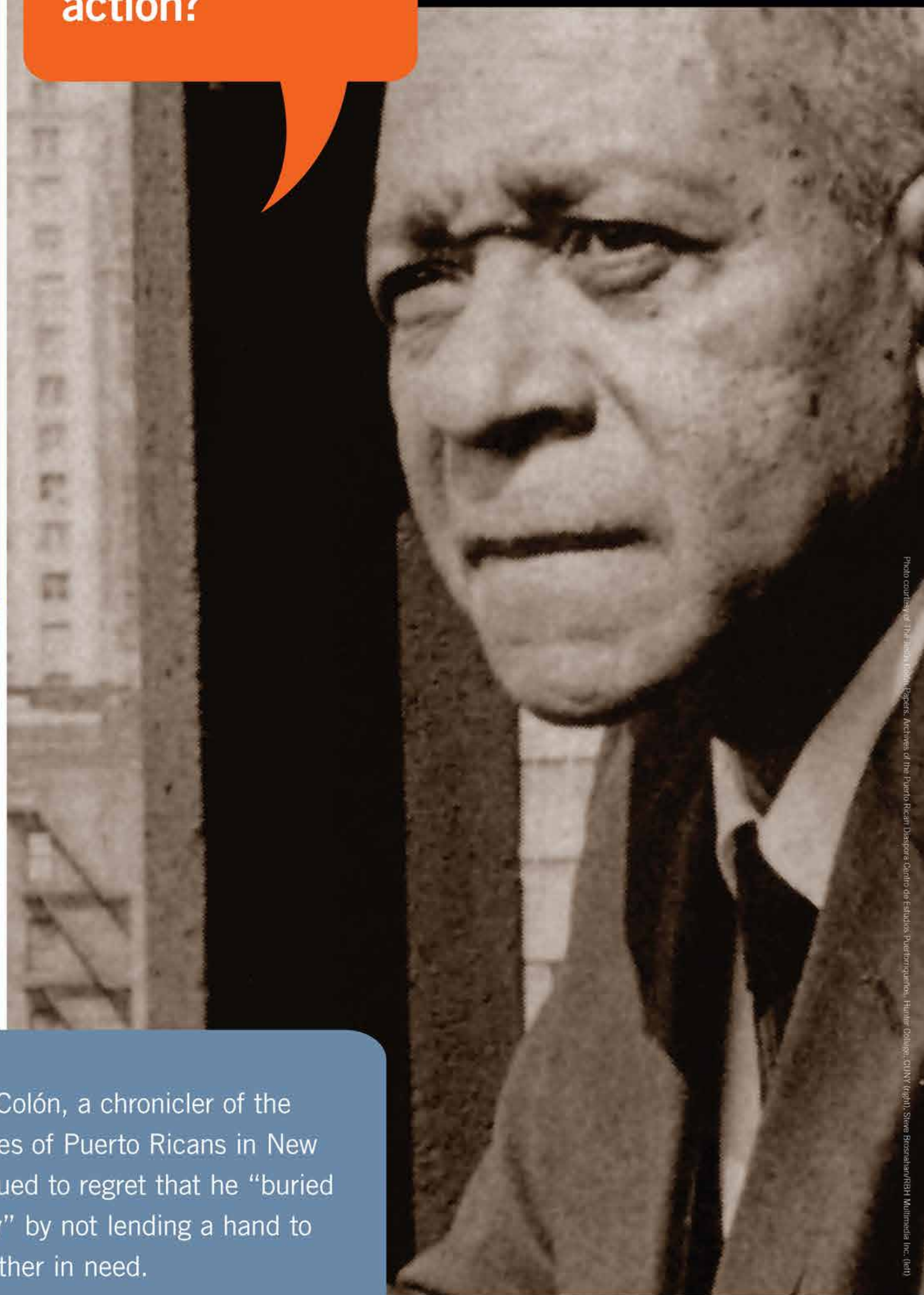
**What prevented you from taking action?**

“Suppose I approach this white lady in this deserted subway station late at night? What would she say? What would be the first reaction of this white American woman . . . with a valise, two children, and a baby on her right arm? But here is a promise that I make to myself here and now: if I am ever faced with an occasion like that again, I am going to offer my help regardless of how the offer is going to be received.”

Jesús Colón



Years later, Colón, a chronicler of the everyday lives of Puerto Ricans in New York, continued to regret that he “buried his courtesy” by not lending a hand to a young mother in need.



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Scores of Billings, Montana citizens assembled holding menorahs in solidarity.



NOT IN  
OUR TOWN

Why do some people  
stand up to help  
people in need while  
others stand by?

“Hate crimes are not a police problem. They’re a community problem. Hate crimes and hate activity flourish only in communities that allow them to flourish.”

Former Police Chief Wayne Inman, Billings, Montana

# » CHOOSE TO PARTICIPATE

Hate-filled fliers marked the start of a campaign to make Montana and other western states a “white homeland.” Then came intimidation—racial slurs, death threats, and the harassment of Jews, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and African Americans. And then, on December 2, 1993, the hatred turned into violence. Someone hurled a cinderblock through a child’s bedroom window decorated with Star of David decals and a menorah, the symbol of Chanukah. As the attacks escalated, people in Billings began to take a new look at their community and themselves. As an act of solidarity, people across Billings displayed menorahs in their windows, kicking off a powerful campaign that forced the hate groups to back off. The story was documented in a film *Not In Our Town* (niot.org) and soon inspired an international movement against hate.

Members of the local painters union volunteered to repaint a neighbor’s home defaced by racist graffiti.





# START WHERE YOU ARE.

Post a selfie with your pledge on social using **#HoCoUpstander**

Tag us:  
**@HoCoLibrary**



**"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of convenience and comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."**

*—Martin Luther King, Jr.*

## Create Your Own Upstander Pledge

Use these ideas to inspire your own pledge. Write what feels right to you and help us build our pledge wall.

## I PLEDGE TO BE AN UPSTANDER BY:

**Speaking out against injustice** whenever I see it.

**Treating everyone with kindness** and respect, no matter our differences.

**Supporting my neighbors** when they need help or encouragement.

**Celebrating diversity** and welcoming everyone in our community.

**Listening with an open mind** and learning from others.

**Taking responsibility** for my actions and their impact.

**Acting with integrity** in everything I do.

**Participating in community life**, whether by volunteering or voting.

**Protecting the environment** through sustainable choices.

**Being a role model** and inspiring others to do the same.





**Let's build a  
stronger, kinder  
community—  
together!**

**HEY,  
HOWARD  
COUNTY!**

**Hi**