In Search Of Your Own Identity Essay, Research Paper

After various writings by Richard Rodriguez and Octavio Paz, I have come across several realizations. Who am I? Should I be a part of a nation and a system that does not value me, or should I be a part of a nation that does not acknowledge my existence? The United States as a nation does not value me, and M xico does not even know that I exist. These are difficult matters to discuss. We are all in search of our own identity. However, some of us are placed in a situation that makes it very difficult and confusing to know or understand. I have always asked myself, Who am I? I should put it in more crude words, Where do I belong? After this specific question is asked, I begin to realize that I have problems coming up with a response. My parents were born in M xico, and thus, they are Mexican. Sometimes I feel I belong here in the United States, but other times I feel more attached to M xico. I am a Mexican-American. However, I feel that I am denying in some way my heritage and my culture by saying that I am. I am denying my parents. I say that I m Mexican because in a sense I am. I am also an American. I am a Mexican-American. What do these terms put together imply? They should imply that the person is Mexican and American. The term Mexican-American is the very reason why I find myself confused about who I really am. I need to search for my own identity, which leads me to the purpose of this essay. Rodriguez and Paz have discussed this particular problem of identity. All three have different viewpoints. Some of their ideas are similar but mostly contradictory, especially in the case of Rodriguez and Paz. As I was reading, I was able to relate to what they had to say, and in a much bigger sense, I was able to understand and know who I am. I was able to find my self.

According to Paz, self-discovery is most than anything realizing that we are alone. Paz argues that our being or our identity becomes a problem and a question. It becomes a problem because of several reasons. We just don t simply wake up one day and realize that we don t know who we are. There are individuals who are placed in difficult situations that allow for these questions to arise. For example, the migration of Mexicans to the United States is a situation that will definitely cause many to question their identity. I agree because if we had not moved to the United States, I would simply consider myself a Mexican without a doubt. Paz strongly argues that different circumstances are likely to produce different reactions. This migration is a circumstance that will bring about confusion among the Mexicans about who they really are. It is ironic how a few miles can bring about such a change in you. Personally, I have experiences such a confusion by simply moving twenty miles North of where I lived. I lived in Reynosa since I was eight. Then, my family and I moved here to McAllen. At the beginning, you don t feel quite like you fit. It makes it very difficult because it is a completely different world. Even though the majority of the people are of Mexican origin, it still makes it very hard. After the years, I became somewhat used to the life here and began to feel comfortable. However, I also began to question my identity. It is the moment we cross that border that we lose our identity. Paz argues that instead of asking ourselves questions, we should do something about it. We cannot go on contemplating who we are, rather, we should work with our situation and do something. Our questions are only an excuse for not facing reality. I agree with Paz because sometimes, we continue to complain and complain and simply think about our present situation. However, we do nothing to change it. I believe that Mexican-Americans need to stop talking about our injustices and discrimination and do something. However, Paz does mention that Mexicans have an inferiority complex. We begin to doubt our own abilities. This happens because of our culture. We are taught to listen and stay quiet. On the other hand, Anglo-Americans are taught to voice their opinions. There are many differences in both the Anglo-American culture and Mexican culture. These differences are the reason why it is impossible to blend or mix. We are brought into a culture that is the complete opposite of ours. This is the reason why Paz says that our Mexicanism simply floats. It never exists, and it never goes away. One of the ways we react to this situation is by flaunting our differences. Paz talks about pachucos. They are a group of people of Mexican origin that are known for their language, behavior, and clothing. I remember when I went to high school and we had a pep rally, which landed right on September 16, which is Mexico s independence. A group of friends and I decided to wear red, white, and green to celebrate Mexico s independence. We were simply proud of being Mexicans and wanted to show our pride. However, there were problems with several of the administrators because it wasn t just my friends and I doing it, but other people as well. The pep rally was canceled because they felt that our clothing would distract and cause conflict with the other American students in school. As I was reading Paz, he mentioned that Mexicans dress a certain way to stand out. They know they are rejected by the American society. They do this to be different and stand out. The disguise is a protection because it hides and points them out. Somehow, they are doing this to belong in some way. They are able to catch the attention of the Anglo-Americans. I don t agree with Paz. I believe that sometimes people dress a certain way to show their pride. I do not dress a certain way to be different and so people can notice me. I am proud to be Mexican and want to show it off. When fourth of July comes, I also like to dress in red, white and blue to celebrate America s independence. Is this possible or am I being a hypocrite? This question leads me to Richard Rodriguez.

Richard Rodriguez Hunger of memory is an autobiography. I was able to read only part of his book. I found it quite fascinating. Rodriguez goes through many problems of identity. He has mixed feelings about his own self. He mainly talks about affirmative action. What does the term minority student mean? Is it something we want to be classified as? I had an experience in high school in which a student denied a part of himself. His mother is Anglo and his father is Mexican. However, throughout school, when it was time to check on the ethnicity, he would check out Anglo. He did this throughout his years in school, but when it was his senior year something happened. He decided to go talk to his counselor and tell her to change all his paperwork. He no longer wanted to be classified as Anglo, but Hispanic. When I heard this, it was very surprising. I cannot understand how this particular person decided to simply become Hispanic just so he could get the benefits of affirmative action. He was applying to scholarships and various universities, and he knew that if he was classified as a minority student, he would receive better benefits. This is not right. You cannot simply choose to be Hispanic for your convenience. You should not reject a part of yourself simply for your own benefits. Rodriguez faced this dilemma. He knew that he did not want to be labeled a minority student, but if this is what was going to get him in society, then he simply had to accept. Throughout life, Rodriguez wondered about his identity. He was criticized by many because he was a well-known writer who was invited as a guest speaker. He would be around Anglo-Americans, and many criticized him because they felt he had become a part of them. Is this really true? Isn t your identity how you see yourself? Just because other people see you being around another class or race of people, doesn t mean that you have become a part of them. You simply know that you are Mexican, American, or Mexican-American, and blending with other cultures doesn t necessarily mean you lose your true self. Because of affirmative action, Rodriguez was able to be a guest speaker, and a professor at a university. He felt threatened at times because the felt somewhat alienated by the other society. Rodriguez did not have a good relationship with the Chicano students. He felt threatened by them. These students were still attached to their parents culture. These students knew how to speak Spanish very well. They were proud of their past. Rodriguez on the other hand, spoke in English. His Spanish was not that well. He did not want to associate himself to a past that meant poor . There was one specific time when Rodriguez parents saw a Hispanic student wearing a sarape. They were very surprised. Rodriguez said that these students were foolish to think themselves unchanged by their schooling. I disagree with Rodriguez because I believe that just because you are getting a higher education and have a good job, you forget that you are Hispanic or Mexican-American. Rodriguez simply wanted to justify his own change. He did not want to belong or keep a bond between a past that did not bring fond memories. He was not as disadvantaged as other Hispanics. However, he felt very strongly about not going to Chicano student meetings or social events sponsored by La Raza. I don t agree with him. After reading this, I realized that he is wrong. I am proud to be Mexican-American. I am proud to carry the term Mexican and American. I am proud of my Mexican culture, customs, and beliefs. I don t need to change in order to succeed or attain a higher education. Rodriguez suddenly came to this realization. He could not simply cast out his culture and simply erase it. At some point, he had a discussion with his several Hispanic students in which he did not agree with them. Soon, he was known to others as being a coconut, brown on the outside, white on the inside.

I have learned many things this semester. I had not really given much thought Mexican-American history. I never realized about the various things that were discussed. It was an eye opener. I was also able to realize of the many problems and injustices that Hispanics face here in the United States. However, just like Paz said, we cannot simply contemplate these issues. We need to do something about them. I am attending college to receive a higher education. I know that education is extremely important. However, I am not losing my identity by coming to college. Getting an education does not necessarily make you a different person. I don t agree with Rodriguez s viewpoint. After reading Paz and Rodriguez, I began to see myself in some of what they had to say. I realized that I have gone through a confusion stage. I sometimes don t know where I belong or who I am. I have come to the conclusion that I am simply American. America is a nation filled with various ethnic groups. Hispanics include people from Mexico, Honduras, Puerto Rico, Nicaragua, etc. There are also many Asians. I often ask myself why people from Ireland living here in America aren t labeled Irish-American. They are simply American. Why then should we be labeled Mexican-American? Cant we simply be called American? I have come to the conclusion that I am American. American can mean different things to different people. To me American means being a part of Mexico as well as the United States. I consider myself a lucky person. I am able to be have the best of both worlds: Mexico and the United States. Tomorrow, I will celebrate Mother s Day here in the United States and Monday it will be 10 de mayo, Dia de las Madres in Mexico. My mom is very lucky. She gets two gifts. I don t believe that I am being a hypocrite by doing this. These are some of the advantages of being American.