



Learning from fear

Here's an assignment that Rebecca Nappi developed for her journalism students at Gonzaga University. Nappi is a writer and associate editor at *The Spokesman-Review* in Spokane, Wash. In addition to classes at Gonzaga, she has taught writing classes to women in transition at Spokane Falls Community College.

Assignment:

Think of one person you know in a casual, acquaintance type of way. Or think of a person you've observed at a distance. It should be a person you have never had an in-depth conversation with. It should also be a person whom you fear for reasons you can't quite pinpoint.

Maybe you are intimidated. Maybe the person makes you uncomfortable. Maybe there is a language, cultural or religious barrier. Please don't pick someone whom you should truly be afraid of, someone who might harm you if you do initiate a little conversation. Once you've picked the person, initiate a 10-minute conversation. You can make this a formal request, such as, "I've been assigned the task of interviewing someone I've never talked to in-depth before." Or you can make it more casual. But the conversation needs to go on for at least 10 minutes and you should ask questions that help you get to know the person.

Once you are done, write out a creative response to the experience, keeping in mind some answers to these questions:

- Why are you afraid of the person?
- How did you feel about the person before the conversation?
- Did the conversation change your feelings?
- Are you still afraid of the person?

Please include the name and a brief description (age, gender, occupation) of the person you interviewed.