Faces of America Video

Interview with author Louise Erdrich (interviewed by Henry Louis Gates)

As you watch the interview with Erdrich, please respond to the following questions:

Part 1:

1. What is the “inner pie chart” Erdrich says all Native American people carry inside them?
2. How has the U.S. government “forced” Native peoples to remember and pay attention to their genealogy, or heritage?

Part 2:

1. According to Erdrich, what positive outcome resulted from the termination efforts of the U.S. government (that her grandfather never predicted or saw coming)?
2. As Gates mentions, it would perhaps have made Erdrich’s life easier if her parents had chosen a non-Native identity for her. Why does Erdrich believe her grandfather didn’t think that was an option?

Part 3:

1. Erdrich comments that the 1950s were perhaps the hardest time for Native people in the U.S. What are some of the challenges facing Native tribes during this time?
2. Why would the ability to sell their land not necessarily be a positive thing for Native people?

Part 4:

1. According to Erdrich, how did European settlers view the Native peoples already living on the land?
2. What story does Erdrich tell about Abraham Lincoln that demonstrates how Native Americans have a very different view of history than Europeans?