

This is an actual excerpt from an IB social anthropology exam. It was referenced from an essay published in the *Journal American Anthropologist*. There are reports that the author claimed that her essay was misinterpreted.

**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
HIGHER LEVEL
PAPER 1**

Monday 9 May 2005 (afternoon)

1 hour

“The September 11 tragedy was an unthinkable event that riveted the American public and provoked personal storytelling. In public discourse, it split time into a “before” and “after”. The planes and pictures of those melting towers created a horrifying instance of time lifted out of the ordinary stream of things. Such times are particularly worthy of a story and September 11 offers a place to examine the *cultural work of stories* by provoking the rethinking and reworking of cultural identity.

We explored the way September 11 was experienced by Los Angeles-dwelling African-American single mothers”..... “Suddenly, America was not safe and it abruptly became unthinkable to proceed as though life were normal. The stories the women told demonstrated a shared identity both with one another [and] with the rest of public America.”

It continues (heavily edited on the actual exam):

..... “the reiteration that the September 11 events had not changed the world for American blacks, who have long been the victims of violence”.

This led to an identification with other peoples of color on a global level because of a shared history of victimization by whites”.

”One of the women, Stella, hypothesized that being black allowed for greater compassion towards the terrorists than whites would have.””She then linked the white American reaction to the Islamic terrorists to the white American reaction to black Americans. In this move, she invoked another powerful “imagined community”, a broad international diaspora consisting of peoples of color.

A number of authors have reported that the original author of the essay which forms the basis for this heavily edited exam question has expressed outrage that her work was distorted and the edited essay did not reflect the actual author’s intent. You decide.