

# Learning with Lander

## Making Americans and the Importance of Belonging in Immigrant Education

### Presenter:

#### Jessica Lander

History and Civics Teacher of Immigrant-Origin Students

- Author: [Making Americans: Stories of Historic Struggles, New Ideas, and Inspiration in Immigrant Education](#) (Published by Beacon Press)
  - [2024 George Orwell Award](#), presented by the National Council of Teachers of English to, "writers who have made outstanding contributions to the critical analysis of public discourse"
- Co-Author: [Powerful Partnerships: A Teacher's Guide to Engaging Families for Student Success](#) (Co-authored with Dr. Karen Mapp and Ilene Carver, Published by Scholastic)

#### Get in touch

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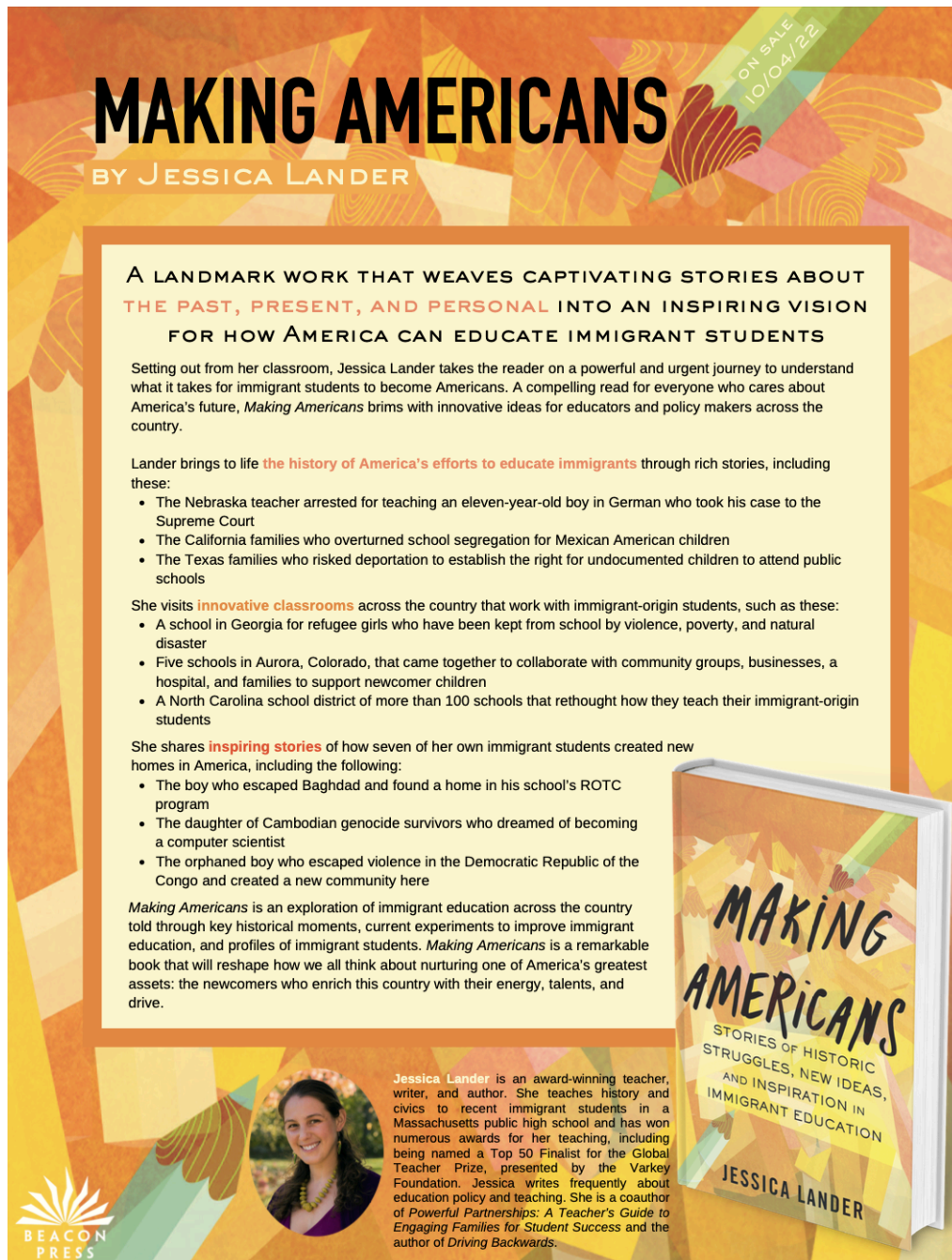
#### Deep Dive into Making Americans

- Making Americans [Reading Guide](#) (Questions to guide group discussion)
- Making Americans [Teaching Guide](#) (50 pg Teaching Guide with questions, primary sources, and activities)
- Opportunities to [Learn with Lander](#) (single and multi part workshops + Professional development for schools and districts + speaking + consulting)

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# Making Americans



**MAKING AMERICANS**  
BY JESSICA LANDER

ON SALE 10/04/22

**A LANDMARK WORK THAT WEAVES CAPTIVATING STORIES ABOUT THE PAST, PRESENT, AND PERSONAL INTO AN INSPIRING VISION FOR HOW AMERICA CAN EDUCATE IMMIGRANT STUDENTS**

Setting out from her classroom, Jessica Lander takes the reader on a powerful and urgent journey to understand what it takes for immigrant students to become Americans. A compelling read for everyone who cares about America's future, *Making Americans* brims with innovative ideas for educators and policy makers across the country.

Lander brings to life **the history of America's efforts to educate immigrants** through rich stories, including these:

- The Nebraska teacher arrested for teaching an eleven-year-old boy in German who took his case to the Supreme Court
- The California families who overturned school segregation for Mexican American children
- The Texas families who risked deportation to establish the right for undocumented children to attend public schools

She visits **innovative classrooms** across the country that work with immigrant-origin students, such as these:

- A school in Georgia for refugee girls who have been kept from school by violence, poverty, and natural disaster
- Five schools in Aurora, Colorado, that came together to collaborate with community groups, businesses, a hospital, and families to support newcomer children
- A North Carolina school district of more than 100 schools that rethought how they teach their immigrant-origin students

She shares **inspiring stories** of how seven of her own immigrant students created new homes in America, including the following:

- The boy who escaped Baghdad and found a home in his school's ROTC program
- The daughter of Cambodian genocide survivors who dreamed of becoming a computer scientist
- The orphaned boy who escaped violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and created a new community here

*Making Americans* is an exploration of immigrant education across the country told through key historical moments, current experiments to improve immigrant education, and profiles of immigrant students. *Making Americans* is a remarkable book that will reshape how we all think about nurturing one of America's greatest assets: the newcomers who enrich this country with their energy, talents, and drive.

**Jessica Lander** is an award-winning teacher, writer, and author. She teaches history and civics to recent immigrant students in a Massachusetts public high school and has won numerous awards for her teaching, including being named a Top 50 Finalist for the Global Teacher Prize, presented by the Varkey Foundation. Jessica writes frequently about education policy and teaching. She is a coauthor of *Powerful Partnerships: A Teacher's Guide to Engaging Families for Student Success* and the author of *Driving Backwards*.

BEACON PRESS

## Buy *Making Americans*

- Hardcover: [Amazon](#), [B&N](#)
- Ebook: [Kobo](#), [Google Play](#), [Apple](#), [B&N](#), [Amazon](#)
- Audiobook: [Kobo](#), [Google Play](#), [B&N](#), [Amazon](#)
- Buy in bulk for districts / organizations with discount: [Porchlight](#)

# The We Are America Project

The national [We Are America Project](https://www.weareamericaproject.com/) was co-created by high school students and their teacher to give space for the nation's young people to publicly share their American identities and to spark community conversations around identity.

In 2018, Lowell High School teacher Jessica Lander asked students in her Seminar on American Diversity to grapple with what it meant to be American. As the class studied “big history” learning about landmark Supreme Court cases, centuries of changemakers and transformative legislation, they simultaneously began studying their own personal histories. History of course is the collection of millions of individual stories and experiences. Students set out to understand how the laws and movements that we were studying intertwined with their families' histories. They interviewed grandparents, parents, and other family members and they interviewed each other. They began claiming movements, marches and policies as part of their own histories. And, as they listened to each other's stories, they learned to empathize with one another. That year, Lander's students wrote and published two books—*We Are America*, and a sequel, *We Are America Too*. “It was also a relief to finally share my story,” one student reflected. Another remarked, “It felt important to share. My story has to be known.” The students went on to speak on radio, to newspaper reporters, and to audiences at nearby universities. Believing the work needed to grow, alumni of the class and Lander launched the national *We Are America Project*.

The project is wrapping up mentoring its second cohort of teachers from across the country. Over the past two years, the National *We Are America* team has worked with ~50 teachers in more than 25 U.S. states, who work with more than 1500 students--helping the next generation share their personal stories of American history and identity. These stories are published in books in their community and on the project's website library. The project is sparking community conversations about identity and creating space for each young person to claim publicly their American identity and their place in our country's history and our future. The project's founders believe this work is essential as the United States grapples with systemic racism and centuries of injustice. The stories these students are sharing in the National *We Are America Project* have the power to help build empathy among people of different backgrounds, ethnicities and faiths and ensure all young people feel they belong here. The National *We Are America Project* has partnered with three leading national partners: *Facing History and Ourselves*, *Re-Imagining Migration*, and New York's *Tenement Museum*.



**We Are America Website:** <https://www.weareamericaproject.com/>

- Twitter: @WeAreAmericaPr1
- Email: [www.weareamericaproject.com/contact](https://www.weareamericaproject.com/contact)

## **Resources from We Are America National Partners**

### **Reimagining Migration**

- Website: <https://reimaginingmigration.org/>
- Resources and Lessons: <https://reimaginingmigration.org/resources-and-lesson-plans/>
- Moving Story Project by Carola Suárez-Orozco for the classroom and the community: <https://reimaginingmigration.org/moving-stories-home/>

### **Facing History and Ourselves**

- [Website](#)
- Teaching Resources: <https://www.facinghistory.org/how-it-works/teaching-resources>
- [Identity in America](#) - 6 Part Lesson

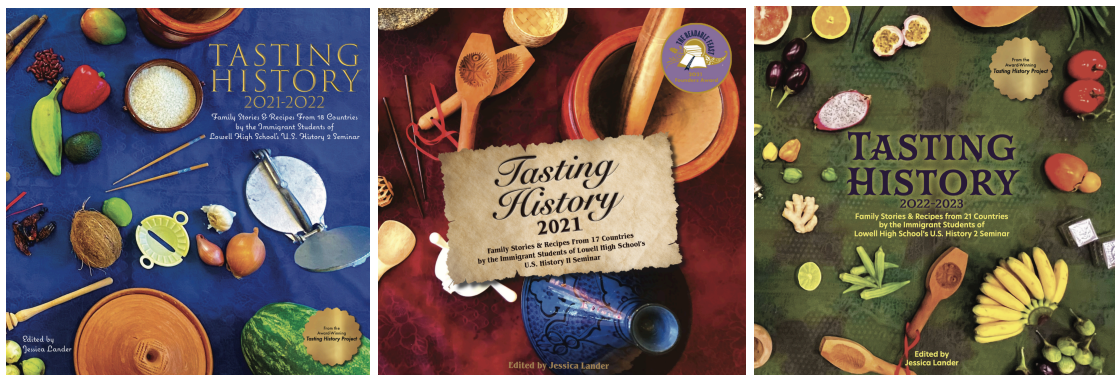
### **Tenement Museum**

- Website: <https://www.tenement.org/>
- Lesson Plans: [https://www.tenement.org/lesson\\_plans/](https://www.tenement.org/lesson_plans/)
- Virtual Field Trips: <https://www.tenement.org/virtual-field-trips/>
- Your Story / Our Story Project: <https://www.tenement.org/explore/your-story-our-story/>

## The Tasting History Project

Each year my U.S. History students write a cookbook of family recipes passed down through generations and share their reflections on their migration journeys—memories of far away homelands and dreams of American futures. The project is the culmination of our study of immigration from the late 1800s and early 1900s. We reflect on Emma Lazarus's poem at the base of the Statue of Liberty; we read the poems written by immigrants into the walls of Angel Island in San Francisco; we study laws that attempted to exclude—the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Johnson Reed Immigration Act; and we discuss how those laws were ultimately overturned, allowing America to welcome immigrants once more. Having studied the journeys and experiences of the 19th century immigrants, I ask my students to share their 21st century migration stories. The Tasting History Project has become a powerful way to connect the stories and experiences of immigrants of the early 20th century with the stories and experiences of my immigrant students in the 21st century. The project also allows us to center my students' families knowledge and expertise in our classroom. Our hope is that the Tasting History Cookbook Project helps create space to ensure that my immigrant students understand that *their* history is an important part of this country's history. And that we all have so much to learn from them.

[Learn more about the Tasting History Project](#), listen to podcasts and radio interviews featuring the student authors and read articles featuring the project.



## **List of Children’s books spotlighting immigrant stories**

I created this growing list of books for young readers that spotlight and share stories of immigrant students. This is an ever growing list and if you have suggestions for additional titles It would be great to hear them

- [Lander’s Classroom Book List](#)

## **Organizations working in Immigrant and Refugee Education + Additional Resources**

- [Becoming US](#), National Museum of American History
- [iLearn America](#)
- [Immigrant Connections](#)
- [REACH](#)
- [Re-imagining Migration](#)
- [Tenement Museum](#)
- [Welcoming America](#)
  
- [US Department of Education: Newcomer Toolkit](#)
- [US Department of Education: English Learner Toolkit \(translations\)](#)
  - [US Department of Ed: Family Toolkit](#) (multiple languages)

\*Do you know of other organizations + resources that you think are particularly helpful/doing good work? I would love to hear about them!

## **Great Recent Books about Immigrant and Refugee Education**

[Right Where We Belong](#), by Sarah Dryden-Peterson

In *Right Where We Belong*, Sarah Dryden-Peterson discovers that, where governments and international agencies have been stymied, refugee teachers and students themselves are leading. From open-air classrooms in Uganda to the hallways of high schools in Maine, new visions for refugee education are emerging.

[If You Only Knew: Letters from an Immigrant Teacher](#) by Emily Francis

Written with passion and a visceral commitment to her students, *If You Only Knew: Letters from An Immigrant Teacher* reflects the journey and experiences of Emily Francis, an immigrant and unaccompanied minor who travels from Guatemala to the USA to become a teacher. Once in the classroom, “Ms. Francis” learns about her

students' stories and journeys and begins to see her own life reflected in the lives of her students.

[\*Creating a Sense of Belonging for Immigrant and Refugee Students\*](#) by Mandy Manning, Ivonne Orozco Sahi, Leah Juelke, Sarahí Monterrey

Discover how to create a sense of belonging and connection for your immigrant and refugee students. This timely book, written by four award-winning teachers, offers compelling stories and practical applications to help you reach your students in the classroom and beyond.

[\*Learning America: One Woman's Fight for Educational Justice for Refugee Children\*](#) by Luma Mufleh

Learning America traces the story of how Mufleh grew a group of kids into a soccer team and then into a nationally acclaimed network of schools for refugee children.

[\*The School I Deserve: Six young Refugees and Their Fight for Equality in America\*](#), by Jo Napolitano

Journalist Jo Napolitano delves into the landmark case in which the School District of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was sued for refusing to admit older, non-English speaking refugees and sending them to a high-discipline alternative school. In a legal battle that mirrors that of the Little Rock Nine and *Brown v. Board of Education*, 6 brave refugee students fought alongside the ACLU and Education Law Center to demand equal access.

[\*Life, Literacy and the Pursuit of Happiness\*](#), by Don Vu

Award-winning principal and literacy advocate Don Vu examines six conditions of a school's culture of literacy (Commitment, Collection, Clock, Conversation, Connection, and Celebration), showing how to create an environment where all students—especially immigrant and refugee children—can thrive. Vu's work is a testament to the transformative power of reading—a key to opening the door for all to realize the American Dream.