

The We Are America Project: Cohort 7

*Are you an 8th-12th grade English, history, civics, or humanities teacher?
Will you join us in creating a new student-led dialogue around identity?*

The [We Are America Project](http://www.weareamericaproject.com) is working with teachers and young people across the country to define what it means to be American — and to spark a new national conversation about American identity today led by the next generation.

www.weareamericaproject.com

We are in **our 7th year** of our national project and currently looking for our **next cohort of We Are America Teacher Fellows to collaborate with!**

Please read more below to learn about the project. We hope you will consider applying to be a member of next year's teacher cohort.



Who We Are

We are former [students](#) from Lowell High School, located in Lowell Massachusetts, working together with our teacher, Jessica Lander. During the 2018-2019 school year, we learned together with Ms. Lander in a course titled the *Seminar on American Diversity*. Over the course of a semester, we set out to together define what we thought it meant to be American. To do this, we analyzed key laws and Supreme Court cases, studied famous movements and changemakers who fought for social justice, and also looked at our own personal histories and worked to set them within the larger framework of American history.

That year we wrote and edited two books of personal stories: *We Are America* and *We Are America Too*. Each of us shared a story of self that we thought helped to define and answer the question: What does it mean to be American? We hoped to help start a local conversation on identity and belonging.

The National We Are America Project

We believe that this conversation is critical now and that we - young people who are the future of America - should have a role in defining what being American means to us. We believe that this is an essential conversation to have.

That is why we created the National *We Are America Project* in June 2019. Our goal is to help spark a new national conversation around what it means to be American, and we want that conversation to be led by our generation. We want to take what we started in our classroom in Lowell, Massachusetts and work to include the voices of more young people across our nation. We believe that we all have an important story to tell that needs to be heard.

We are collaborating with three leading national partners: *Facing History and Ourselves*, *Re-Imagining Migration*, and New York's *Tenement Museum*. Over the past three years we have worked with extraordinary teachers across the country.

SEEKING: We Are America Teacher Fellows, Cohort 7 (2025-2026)

We are currently seeking applications for the sixth cohort of We Are America teachers who will, with their class, over the course of the year write a book composed of the personal stories of identity of the students in their class, stories that together will give us a richer and deeper understanding of what it means to be American. All of these stories will also be recorded and uploaded to our website for people throughout the country to listen and learn from! (Details and application below).

Teachers Interested in Applying

Teaching the *We Are America Project* in your classroom:

We have an ambitious plan, and we can't do it without you! Will you *commit* to teaching this project in your classroom and with your students in the upcoming 2023-2024 school year.

What does this project entail?

Over the course of the semester (or year), participating teachers will work with students to explore, develop and write a true story of self that helps all of us have a richer, deeper understanding of what it means to be American. We leave it to you to determine when in the year it would be best to run the project and how many class periods you will need. Your students will brainstorm, write, and edit their stories, which will be collected in a published anthology that you and your students can share with your school, families, and communities. Students will also record their stories, which will be added to our [national website](#) together with their photos. While this project may seem a bit daunting, we are here to support you. Over the course of the project, we will be providing a range of support to ensure that the *We Are America Project* is a success. Specifically, we will provide:

- A curriculum of lessons to help guide students to first explore their identity and learn how their history fits within the larger narrative of U.S. history and then a series of lessons to help students develop, brainstorm, write and edit their stories, and a curriculum map for you to help plan how to lay out and integrate this project into your larger curriculum.
- Regular email check-ins with our founder team to advice, brainstorm, and troubleshoot.
- Monthly ZOOM professional development meetings to review components of the project, meet with your cohort of teachers from across the country, and learn from our national education partners for personalized PD.
- 100 copies of your finished book for you to share with your students and community.

In exchange we ask that you:

- Engage and collaborate with us! That you bring your energy, ideas, and passions to this work!
- Commit to attending our once a month 1 hour zoom webinars as they are important for explaining the project, supporting your work on the project, and building a strong teacher community.

We recognize that writing a published book of student stories and truths is hard work. This project will take dedicated time, but we have seen how powerful and transformative the process and final project has been for many teachers and students across the country and we hope you will be excited to join us in this journey!

Stipend

Because we know that teaching a new project takes time and planning, we have raised money to provide each teacher with a stipend of \$500 to honor your commitment to the project. The stipend will be paid at the completion of the project. We have also raised money to pay for the

cost of laying out and publishing the book you will create with your class. With this funding, you and your class will get 100 copies of your completed book for you to share with your students and their families, your school and your community.

Join Us

We hope you are excited about the project and the possibility of working with us to start this necessary national conversation led by young people.

Thank you so much for considering being a part of this national project and we hope you [apply!](#)

[APPLY HERE!](#)

All the best,

Jessica Lander and Robert Aliganyira, Safiya Al Samarraï, Carla Duran Capellan, Nicole Harrison, Katherine Huang, Philly Marte, Erika Pen, Lucie Rwakabuba, Ricardo Vargas, Julian Viviescas

If you have questions please email us at: [**TheWeAreAmericaproject@gmail.com**](mailto:TheWeAreAmericaproject@gmail.com)

Check out our **Website** to learn more about our work: www.weareamericaproject.com

Follow up on **Twitter**: [@WeAreAmericaPr1](#)

Read about our work in the [Boston Globe](#), the [Harvard Gazette](#), the [Harvard Graduate School of Education Website](#), and [WBUR](#).

A Few Reflections from Teachers in earlier cohorts

"I think one of the biggest things was that students realized they were not the only ones writing about that topic or theme. In a classroom circle discussion where everyone shared a piece of their story, one girl mentioned, "Wow, all of our stories are connected to someone else's in some way." I think this was crucial for students to know they are not alone in dealing with bullying, learning their culture, identifying themselves and much more." ~ High School Teacher

"I believe some of my students sometimes hesitated at their chance to be proudly and definitively American due to the location of their birth, their family background, their immigration status, or racial identity. I think they absolutely saw themselves as American but this project gave them an opportunity to be proud of their specific American identity, recognizing American identity as a plurality for many different people and their own voice as a valid one within the group." ~ High School Teacher

"This was an excellent way to explore diversity. I tried to bring in literature to provide a variety of examples of diversity. My school is not extremely diverse [so] resources were necessary. It did open students' minds and allowed them to see outside of themselves." ~ 8th grade teacher

"I think [my students] are more open-minded and realize the struggles that some of their classmates have experienced." ~ 8th grade teacher

"Students felt heard as they reached out to tell me this. Some even mentioned it opened up more conversations within their own family and others discussed how grateful they were to discuss this at school. When [one] student told me how she would have never told stories like this, mainly because she grew up speaking Spanish and she worried people would make fun of her accent, but now she knows the importance of her story and how she will tell it, that makes all of this more than worth it." ~ High School Teacher

"Several students have emailed me in the last month to let me know it was one of the best projects they completed in High School. The real world component, the fact that their work is featured on the website and published in a book, shows them that while they may be young high school students they can make a difference." ~ High School Teacher

Students realized that they were all (even if they weren't born here) American. This was important because the world view of Americans can be both positive and negative. At the same time, Americans have both positive and negative characteristics. This helped them to develop their view of being an American as more than just one thing or another; instead it is a plethora of characteristics and cultures that comprise America. ~ High School Teacher