

# Our Democracy's Toolkit for Learning

activities, ideas and resources for project-based learning and multimedia production  
in middle school, high school and college classrooms



education materials developed by: **Lorraine A. Ustaris**  
videographer and education specialist  
at **Our Democracy**,  
a project led by award-winning photojournalist **Andrea Bruce**

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In partnership with



# **Our Democracy**

By Andrea Bruce

I am a photographer, and for most of my life I worked in international conflict zones. Working in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Mexico, people often asked me what Americans believe the word “democracy” means.

I gave them answers about things like the Bill of Rights, but I saw the gap between my answer and their understanding. I became dissatisfied with my answers.

Once I returned to the US, I was left wondering how people here at home, especially students, would answer the same question. These wonderings became the impetus for the Our Democracy project, one that seems especially important during this election season.

## **How do we separate Democracy from Politics?**

If you and your students are seeking to explore the concept and experience of democracy, free from partisan issues, we invite you to join us in the “Our Democracy” project, created with the support of the National Geographic Society and PhotoWings.

The project started three years ago as a visual exploration and community outreach effort led by a videographer, a writer, and myself, a photographer. We visited communities of all types across the US, engaging others to consider what our democracy meant to them.

The team traveled the route that Alexis de Tocqueville took to study democracy in the mid-1800s. We used visual and audio storytelling tools to immerse ourselves in different communities and understand those communities’ experiences and thoughts on contemporary democracy in the United States.

In Spring 2020, of course, travel stopped.

## **Where do I get involved?**

Now, in partnership with the NWP, we are pleased to share a toolkit and launch a student/community publication site that lets us all explore the question, “what does democracy look like in our individual lives and communities?” The toolkit and site will

enable a broad and inclusive conversation about the ideas that are the backbone of our political system.

By answering invitations to participate in the toolkit, students can share their perspectives on democracy in writing, video or photography and publish their work on the NWP map of the United States.

The toolkit includes resources to support classrooms as they create multimedia content for the Our Democracy map. Teachers and students can choose from a playlist of quick activities for exploring democracy and a collection of suggested storytelling projects. The words, photography and video students produce about their lives and communities will echo work that will be published in National Geographic online in October.

How to Participate:

- Check out the homepage for the project here:  
<https://writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy/home>
- See if the toolkit provides useful activities for your classroom
- Sign up at the site to receive a code that will allow you and your students to upload their work while protecting their privacy
- Upload the finished products in word, video or photo form
- Interact with classrooms in other regions

We can't wait to see your students' involvement, to encourage visual storytelling and to further conversations about our democracy.

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Photo Credit: this document features photography by National Geographic Explorer Andrea Bruce and school and community contributors to the Our Democracy project from across the United States

## Introduction: Our Democracy's Toolkit for Learning



Before making a career transition into journalism and media production, I was a full-time high school English teacher in Philadelphia's public school system for 6 years. Critical literacy was central to my courses, and my students and I studied the texts of our lives within and alongside the literature and multimedia texts we read. My students represented the diversity of races, classes, genders, cultures and creeds in our city, but the life stories they shared with me were stories too often underreported in mainstream news media.

In 2015, I left the classroom with the dream of one day being in a position to bring stories like theirs to a wider audience to help foster deeper intercultural understanding in America and abroad. As a member of the Our Democracy team, contributing as both a videographer and educator, I finally feel positioned to do so.

Democratizing our reporting process is one of our team's foremost project goals. Our team's response to the question "What does democracy look like?" would be wholly incomplete without stories directly produced by those living in the communities we've visited and in the countless other American communities we haven't yet seen...

Stories we're inviting teachers and young people from those communities to help us tell from their unique and invaluable perspectives.

The Our Democracy Toolkit provides educators with information and resources they'll need to lead their learning communities in this endeavor and publish student work on [the interactive reporting map we've created with the National Writing Project](#).

The toolkit is organized into three main sections:

- 1) **A Playlist** of lessons for engaging students as they begin to explore conceptual or theoretical understandings of democracy. This section consists of activities that can be completed in one class period or less time and provide students with opportunities to practice photography, develop visual literacy skills, and write using figurative language and poetic imagery.

- 2) **Project-Based Learning Ideas** for teachers and students who have more time to take a closer look at democracy within their families and communities as storytellers and reporters. I've offered project-based learning ideas for multimedia storytelling with options in every medium we're using on the Our Democracy team -- written word, photography and video. We've also included some samples of finished content to inspire teachers and students as they begin their projects.

At the top of each new lesson on the playlist and within the project-based learning options, teachers will find a summative box presenting a specific invitation to participate from the Our Democracy team and learning objectives written in the standards based "Student will be able to" or "SWBAT" format. Additionally, I've scaffolded and sequenced so that each activity builds on skills practiced in the preceding exercises.

Still, all of the lessons have been written as loosely structured plans. The collection has been designed for learning communities who need the flexibility to engage with the Our Democracy project at varying levels of participation and commitment. Teachers can choose to try one activity in the collection, complete a few lessons, or even integrate the entire toolkit into their curriculum.

- 3) **Appendix** of supplemental resources and additional information. The toolkit contains lessons involving photography, video production, and activities centered on visual, media and news literacies. To support student learning in these areas, and teachers who might be teaching multimedia storytelling for the very first time, we've provided links to online resources from [PhotoWings](#), an incredible nonprofit dedicated to utilizing the power of photography to further deep thinking, communication, and action, as well as, short lists of resources from other media education organizations.

The immeasurable rewards of learning through exploration and inquiry are the reasons why the scientific and creative processes continue to be taught and integrated into the frameworks of some of the most esteemed institutions for innovation, art and education. From the knowledge journalists gain in the field to the lessons we learn in the edit suite, the processes involved in reporting and producing multimedia stories maximize learning to the same degree.

The Our Democracy team's journeys throughout the United States have led us into the lives of people living in places we might have never encountered—people and places who've shown us how the laws, beliefs and systems within our democracy are evidenced in our personal lives and local experiences in the most expected and unexpected ways every single day. I hope the contents of this toolkit and your participation in the Our Democracy project lead you and your students to powerful human stories that move you to see the connections between democracy and community through new and different lenses.

—Lorraine A. Ustaris

## Our Democracy's Three Questions

Time required: 15 to 55 minutes

**Invitation:** The Our Democracy team organizes a discussion at every location they visit that centers on three specific questions about community and change. Discuss these same three questions with your own class or learning community.

**SWBAT:** share observations and knowledge about the local community and think critically about pathways for change and improvement in their communities.

The Our Democracy team uses an emergent, ethnographic reporting approach in our search for stories that answer the question “What does democracy look like?” throughout this country. We try to arrive at our locations with a wholly adaptable reporting agenda so that we learn first about a community from its locals, and then decide on the specific stories and reporting angles we will pursue.

One way we begin to get to know the people in the places we visit is through a community discussion led by Andrea. The conversation revolves around on three specific questions:

**What do you like about your community?**

**What do you want to change about your community?**

**How would you change these things?**

We ask these questions in this exact order, and learn so much from people’s honest and open responses.

So we’d like to begin this toolkit and your students’ experiences with the Our Democracy project with these three questions as well.

Here are three ways you can do this...

**If you have 15 minutes or less...**

Assign these questions as a journal entry. Give your students some time to write and reflect. Conclude the journaling activity with a quick share out.

**If you have an entire class period...**

Lead your students in a longer discussion focused on the team's three questions.

During the discussion, record students' responses on the board for the rest of the class to see. The Our Democracy team has found it very helpful for discussion participants to see their collective responses to the first two questions as they begin thinking critically about the third question, "How would you change these things?"

**If you have another class period...**

The first location the Our Democracy team visited together was Memphis, Tennessee. There, Andrea discussed these same three questions with a compelling group of formerly incarcerated people at a re-entry program called Lifeline for Success.

Watch and discuss Andrea's Memphis conversation with your students through these resources created by Lorraine with funding from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, who supported the Our Democracy team's initial work in Memphis:

[Memphis Discussion Video](#)

[Teaching guide for the Memphis Discussion](#)



## **Why don't our three discussion questions include the word "democracy"?**

The next lessons you'll find in this toolkit will all center on the word "democracy". They will include activities and storytelling projects that we hope will move you and your students to begin a lifelong inquiry into the concept of "democracy" and its meaning in your lives and communities.

But by excluding the word "democracy" from this first discussion, we hope to create an opportunity for you to check for students' firsthand knowledge about their communities and civic engagement. We hope the questions will provide a free space for students to begin thinking about their communities, their participation in those communities, their abilities to directly impact their communities, and whether they feel they have power to effect change in a more organic way--all before they might even realize they're touching on facets and functions of democracy.

As journalists dedicated to using an ethnographic reporting approach, the Our Democracy team also believes in creating a space for free and open dialogue with the communities we cover. One of the things we've learned through this project is that people in America often don't know how to begin to answer questions about the realities of democracy's impact in their lives and communities, if we ask directly. By asking indirectly, we hope community members' answers reveal to us whether or not they truly feel or believe democracy works for them. By excluding the word "democracy" from these first three questions, we hope participants in our community discussions will be able to speak more honestly and clearly about their experiences and, perhaps, start to think differently about their participation in their own communities in a way that might catalyze a different or renewed engagement, however small it may be.

—Andrea Bruce, Rebecca Sanchez, and Lorraine Ustaris

# This Is What Democracy Looks Like

Time requirement: 20 minutes

**Invitation:** “This is what democracy looks like,” is a popular protest chant. What do you think protesters are saying about democracy through this chant? Share your thoughts in a class discussion.

**SWBAT:** begin defining democracy and evaluating the application of the principles and ideals in American democracy in contemporary civic life.

“What does democracy look like?” is the central inquiry question of the Our Democracy project. It is the question that has guided Andrea Bruce and the Our Democracy team’s documentary expedition across the United States for the last few years. And it is echoed in the declarative chant, “This is what democracy looks like. Show me what democracy looks like,” often heard in media coverage of protests in this country and around the globe.

The following video clips provide examples of coverage featuring this protest chant. Watch any number of these examples (or other clips that might be more suitable for your context) with your students and unpack the “This is what democracy looks like” chant as a means for beginning a conversation about democracy.

**Muslim ban montage from MoveOn.org (2017):**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXqUw5t47\\_Y](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXqUw5t47_Y)

**Students chant outside the White House, calling for gun reform from Global News (2018)**

<https://globalnews.ca/video/4038488/this-is-what-democracy-looks-like-students-chant-outside-white-house>

**Portland Protesters from Sky News (2020)**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWelef7f0\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWelef7f0_4)

\*Important note: The protesters in these videos are participating in demonstrations about controversial issues in American politics. The Our Democracy team maintains a non-partisan political stance and encourages the use of teaching strategies that will maximize learning within your classroom culture and context. We hope the following discussion questions give your students the opportunities they need for independent, critical thinking and questioning during this lesson. Please adapt them as you see fit.

## Viewing and Discussion Questions:

1. What stands out to you in this video? What do you see and hear?
2. Do you have any questions about what you've seen and heard in this video?
3. What do the people in this video seem to be asking for?
4. Consider all of the information and details presented in this clip. How do these protesters seem to be defining democracy through their actions and their chant, "This is what democracy looks like"? What do you think they are referring to when they say "this"?
5. What are they asking for and/or suggesting in the second line from that chant: "Show me what democracy looks like"? And who might they be asking these things from?
6. Do you agree with the definitions of democracy suggested in this protest chant? Why or why not?
7. What else should or could democracy look like? What is your definition for democracy?

This introductory activity can be easily adapted into an extended lesson or included as part of an in depth unit on democracy. Here are a few resources to get started:

### **"Democracy: People Power" from National Geographic Education**

<https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/democracy-people-power/>

### **"What is Democracy?" resources from *Teaching Tolerance***

<https://www.tolerance.org/learning-plan/what-is-democracy>

### ***This is What Democracy Looks Like* Comic Book**

<https://civiceducator.org/civics-comic-books/>

**Democracy** <https://www.britannica.com/topic/democracy/Features-of-ideal-democracy>

### **"Defining Democracy Lesson Plan" from *Facing History***

<https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/defining-democracy>

### **"Is Democracy at Risk?" : a Lesson Plan from *The New York Times***

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/learning/lesson-plans/is-democracy-at-risk-a-lesson-plan-for-us-and-global-history-classes.html>

### **Democracy from TED-ED**

[https://ed.ted.com/best\\_of\\_web/Rgalhs2w](https://ed.ted.com/best_of_web/Rgalhs2w)

# Our Democracy Gallery Walk

Time required: 55 minutes

**Invitation:** Visit the Our Democracy community photo gallery from the comfort of your own classroom or computer. See how other people across the country have responded to the question “What does democracy look like?” through their own original photographs.

**SWBAT:** Read and analyze photographs in order to expand their understandings of democracy through the diverse perspectives of people living in the United States.

Andrea Bruce created the Our Democracy instagram account as a platform for showcasing the original photographs submitted by people across the country in response to the project’s central question, “What does democracy look like?”

The Our Democracy team has selected photographs from their Instagram account for a classroom gallery walk. (The photos appear after this lesson description.)

There are a variety of ways to use this gallery walk to enliven learning and classroom discussion. Feel free to follow the suggested approach outlined below, or adapt the activity for success in your classroom context.

## Directions

1. Print out the gallery photographs and accompanying text.
2. Hang up the photos and accompanying text around your classroom to create a gallery.
3. Assign the attached guided viewing questions, or provide questions you’ve created.
4. After the gallery walk, facilitate a discussion in which students share what they’ve learned from the gallery. The class can work together to begin drawing conclusions about what democracy seems to mean to the photographers featured in this gallery.

**\*Adapting the activity:** An alternative gallery could be created by hanging up only the photographs without the accompanying text, to start. Using this format, you’ll be able to ask students to first interpret how each photographer might be answering the question “What does democracy look like?” through their image. This will give students the opportunity for more practice reading images. The accompanying texts for each image could be shared later during the discussion.

**\*Extending the activity:** Invite your students to take their own photos in response to our project’s central question, and create a gallery walk using their photos and captions. More details for this activity can be found in Lesson #7 the “Our Democracy Photography Walk” on this playlist.

Photos for the:

# OUR DEMOCRACY GALLERY WALK

The following photos, taken by youth and adults from different regions of the United States, were collected between 2017-2020 in response to the question, “What does democracy look like?”

Each photo is accompanied by either a caption penned by its photographer or text that explains what the photographer told the Our Democracy team about their photo.

Print out these images and hang them up in your classroom.  
Or, share this [gallery folder](#) containing the images, so that your students can “walk” the gallery digitally.

\*For the safety and protection of youth contributors to this gallery, we have identified the photographers featured in this collection by their initials only.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Guided Viewing Questions for the Our Democracy Gallery

1. What photo in the gallery stands out most to you and why?
2. **List** the themes and ideas you see and read about in the gallery.
3. **Think Critically:** What do you think this gallery reveals about what democracy looks like to people in the United States?
4. **Define:** Write a new definition for democracy based on the wide range of ideas about democracy in this gallery.
5. **Reflect:** Through this gallery walk, what have you learned about your own knowledge, understandings and beliefs about democracy?



Philadelphia | photo by E. L.

“Democracy can be like a crowded flower box.

Conversations, ideas and thoughts spilling out over the edges. Some voices are more dominant than others. Some voices hanging on at the outskirts. Some voices are not heard at all.”



ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Utah County, Utah | photo by Hannie Smith. "At first glance the souls in Utah State may all appear to be as cookie cutter and white cultured as the houses they live in. However, in places of extreme control, you also find the most rebellion. Utah is filled with countless groups, collectives, organizations, and individuals that are fighting for love and acceptance. I feel honored to grow up in the midst of two divided cultures who may clash at their fundamental differences but, have ultimately shared the goal of a "better Utah" in mind." @noorimages #ourdemocracy #utahcounty #utah @walden\_mermaids

113w



themarymeehan



108 likes

MAY 23, 2017

Add a comment...

Post





Oxford, Mississippi | photo by D.R.

A young teenager stares endlessly into a large body of water. Like democracy, the future appears unknown and unsteady, like waves crashing against the shore. Nevertheless, the teen looks forward to the uncertain future, ready to embrace the waves and bring order to the chaos, just as man has done with democracy.



Philadelphia | photo by E. L.

“This is the myth of Democracy. Do we intentionally say Democracy when we really mean America?”



Oyster River, NH | photo by C.P.

This student interviewed her grandfather about democracy and submitted this photo to represent what she learned:

“Town meetings were key. My grampy mentioned this multiple times. He said that he wishes we would go back to the way we used to do it, which was they would gather as the town of Lee and would sit down and discuss the issues for hours as the whole town and make a decision. People that wanted to have a say could have a say and as a person not wanting to stand and say his or her thoughts they could learn a lot from people speaking. Opinions could change based on what people share.”



Philadelphia | photo by A. G.

“When thinking of democracy, I think of the right to vote. When thinking of the right to vote, I think of how people become aware of candidates, policies, campaigns, etc. My father used to listen to the news everyday on this [radio], carrying it with him wherever he went. I think about the news that was broadcast, and how this shaped the democracy at the time. It also makes me wonder about news outlets today, that are vast and ever growing...”



ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Buchanan County, VA | photo by Lindsey Elswick "It's nothing new to be driving down the road and see, or get stuck behind, a coal truck. But that's what keeps our families fed and people working in Buchanan County. I'm thankful that the hard working people in our county do still have jobs, even though the coal industry isn't as well off as it used to be. Almost everyone in this county works in the coal industry or is related to someone who does. Coal definitely keeps our lights on." #ourdemocracy #virginia #buchanancounty @noorimages

118w



worldrider Solid!! 🍌



50 likes

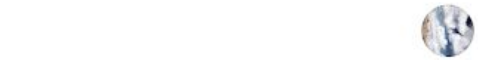
APRIL 15, 2017

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Post



ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Memphis | photo by Robin McKinney: "This is a well known man in my community who happens to be homeless . He was just sitting alone looking very sad and alone so I asked him was he okay and he looked down from the sky and said "yes I'm fine , thank you." and face expressed the feeling of relief. Our "democracy" looks down on people like this sweet man because he's homeless , but deeply , he's just a man without a home and is loved by my community." @noorimages #ourdemocracy #memphis @catchlight.io @pultizercenter @issabirdie\_

63w



juandiego\_reyes ●●



Liked by natgeoyourshot and 108 others

MAY 5, 2018

Add a comment...

Post



Philadelphia | photo by A. L.

“Youth United for Change, a youth leadership organization with headquarters in Kensington, lobbied city council to install these in every Philly public school.”

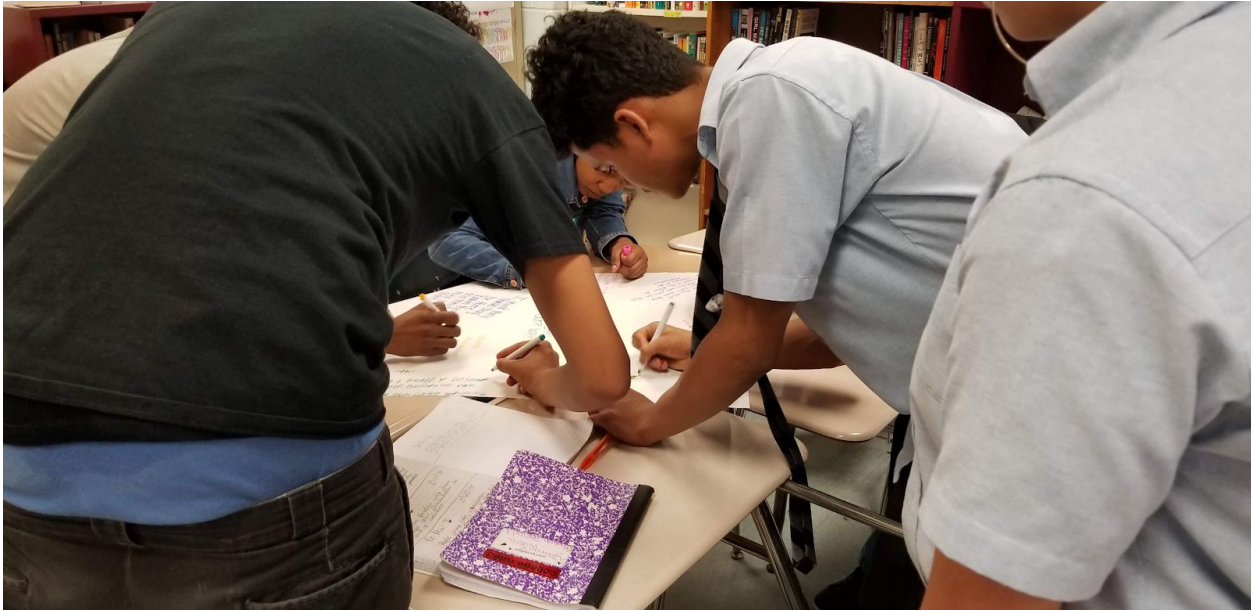


Henderson, KY | G.B. (U.S. Veteran)

England and the United States have had a very controversial history but on that night history was put aside and the people, not the governments, found common ground. Each person regardless of political stance stood as one. Both singing each other's national anthem, each bound by a love for the game. It was amazing lots of high fives, lots of people sharing a common love and most importantly respect for each other.

Democracy is people. Blind to race religion and past history being able to have a common interest.





Philadelphia | photo by M. L.

“Students work together to respond to questions about what causes inequity in our society. Here, they start to put the pieces together to understand the ways leaders do or do not support the people.”



ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Memphis | photo by Kaddarius Campbell. "The sport of Rugby has allowed us to go places and make friends from across the US. If a sport can connect so many people from a variety of different environments, then we as United States Citizens can come together and use our voice for the good of all people and not self-interest." @pultzercenter @catchlight.io @noorimages #memphis #ourdemocracy @kaddarius\_



76 likes

APRIL 29, 2018

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Post



ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Memphis | Photo by Brayla Phillips. "Religion is a form of democracy for my family, though not as much for me. Here, my family is having a prayer where we bless the food and mention the pros and cons that went on before that day." #memphis #ourdemocracy #catchlight @pultzercenter @catchlight.io @brayla\_phillips

66w



creationscape Aloha



66w 1 like Reply



Liked by Pulitzercenter and 56 others

APRIL 17, 2018

Add a comment...

Post



Philadelphia| photo by A. L.

“Pretending there is democracy in our living room; as we all know we’ll just end up watching the Phillies.”



ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Pamlico County, NC | photo by Dylan Levi, 15. democracy is community. "See you at the Pole was a moment when the community came together at the high school flag pole, no matter what we were going through, to just pray for our country."  
@noorimages @thephotosociety #pamlicocounty #northcarolina #ourdemocracy



136w  
ourdemocracy @Dylan.levi  
136w Reply



Liked by natgeoyourshot and 41 others  
DECEMBER 11, 2016

Add a comment...

Post



ourdemocracy • Following

...



ourdemocracy Memphis | Photo by Tayla Thomas - "Celebrating my former teacher's husband surprise birthday party in a diverse setting that is full of happiness and comfort" is what she sees in her community that represents democracy. @noorimages #ourdemocracy #memphis @catchlight.io @pultzercenter

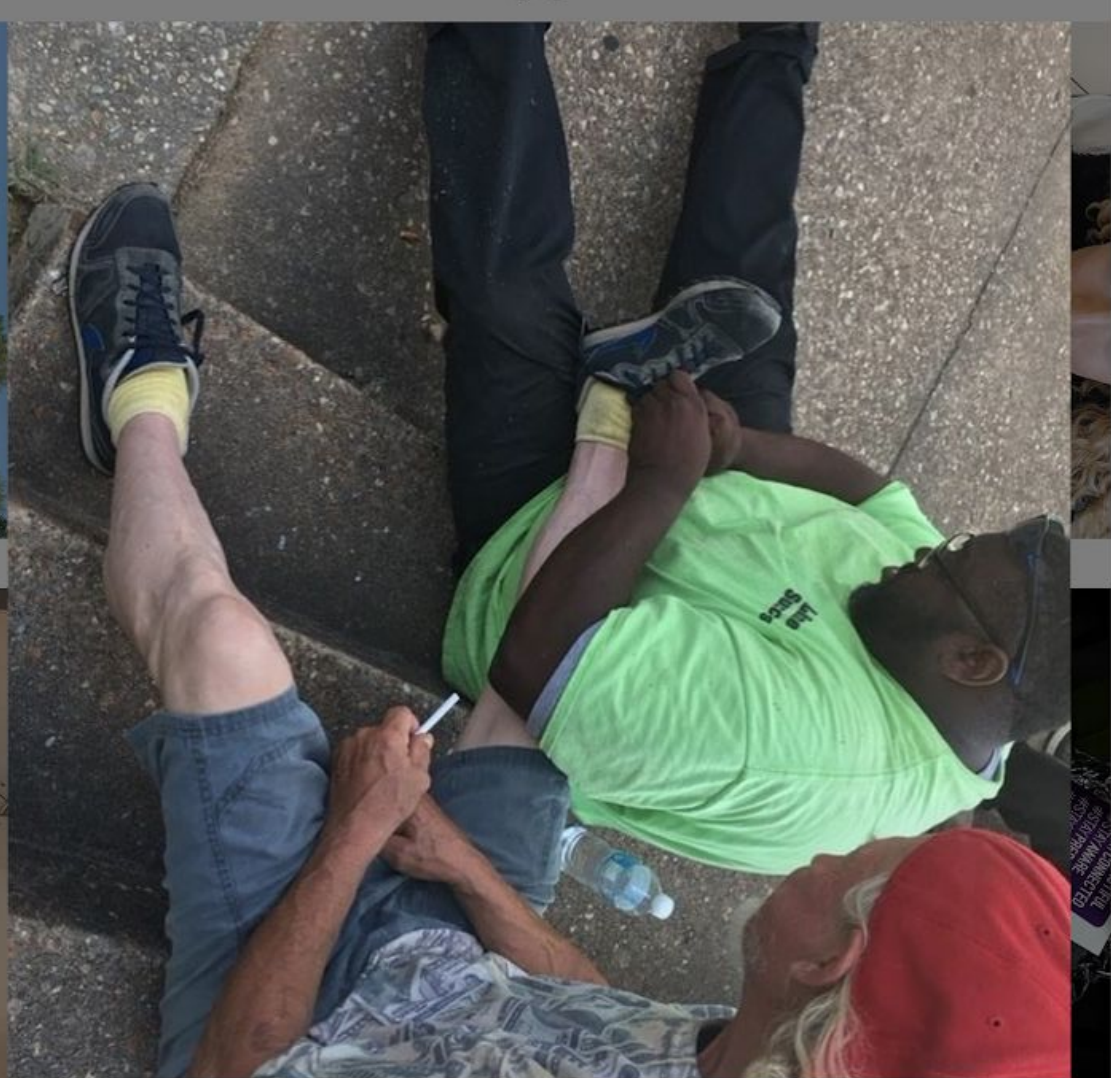
65w



46 likes



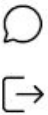
APRIL 20, 2018



ourdemocracy • Following



**ourdemocracy Memphis, TN** | photo by @memphisid901 (Will Golden, who works for Lifeline for Success, a group of ex-offenders tackling blight issues in Memphis) "We were working, waiting on one of our team members to finish and this homeless man was sitting in front of the church we parked in front of so Toby (the big man in the green shirt) asked him could he tie his shoes and the man said brother it's a lot of knots in my shoe strings but he did it anyways I don't know if it was the beer the old man had been drinking or Toby's act of kindness touched his heart the man started to shed tears and thank him for his service it was something awesome to watch." Will believes that democracy doesn't still exist in the US, especially since ex-offenders like himself and Toby can't



Liked by [Lorraineustar](#) and 99 others

SEPTEMBER 13, 2018

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Post



Philadelphia | photo by A. G.

“Democracy on a local and personal level: the classroom. My students often vote for things in the classroom when we need to make decisions about things. They decided voting was a fair way to decide on things because, similar to a democracy, the majority wins.” (Disclaimer: the voting doesn’t always go down like this, but wanted to use a picture without showing student faces).





**ourdemocracy • Following**  
Oriental, North Carolina

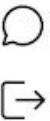


**ourdemocracy** @will.conkwright shares this image from #OrientalNC saying, "Small businesses depend on local support and our #middleclass depends on #smallbusiness. Taking pride in our community means we're taking pride in our country."  
#PamlicoCounty | #OurDemocracy | #PamlicoCounty

125w



**embroiderervain** We are your #1



61 likes

FEBRUARY 27, 2017

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Post



Henderson, KY | G.B. (U.S. Veteran)

When thinking about democracy I think we need to remember something I say a lot:

One person's invading force is another person's freedom.

Afghanistan 2004. I was training the Afghan national army. I'm the guy in the U.S. army tan uniform.



Oyster River, NH | photo by J. L.

This is where most of my memories are made, like when we hosted Thanksgiving and when I learned to ride a bike. This democracy is the “self-governing” of the neighborhood. I can do anything I want in this neighborhood, and it gives me a sense of personal freedom.



ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Buchanan County, VA | photo by Kate Thornbury. "Church is really important in this community. The strong sense of faith brings people together on a common ground. Almost everybody attends every Sunday." #ourdemocracy #buchanancounty #virginia @noorimages

118w



imaortega 🍌🍌🍌

118w 1 like Reply



57 likes

APRIL 17, 2017



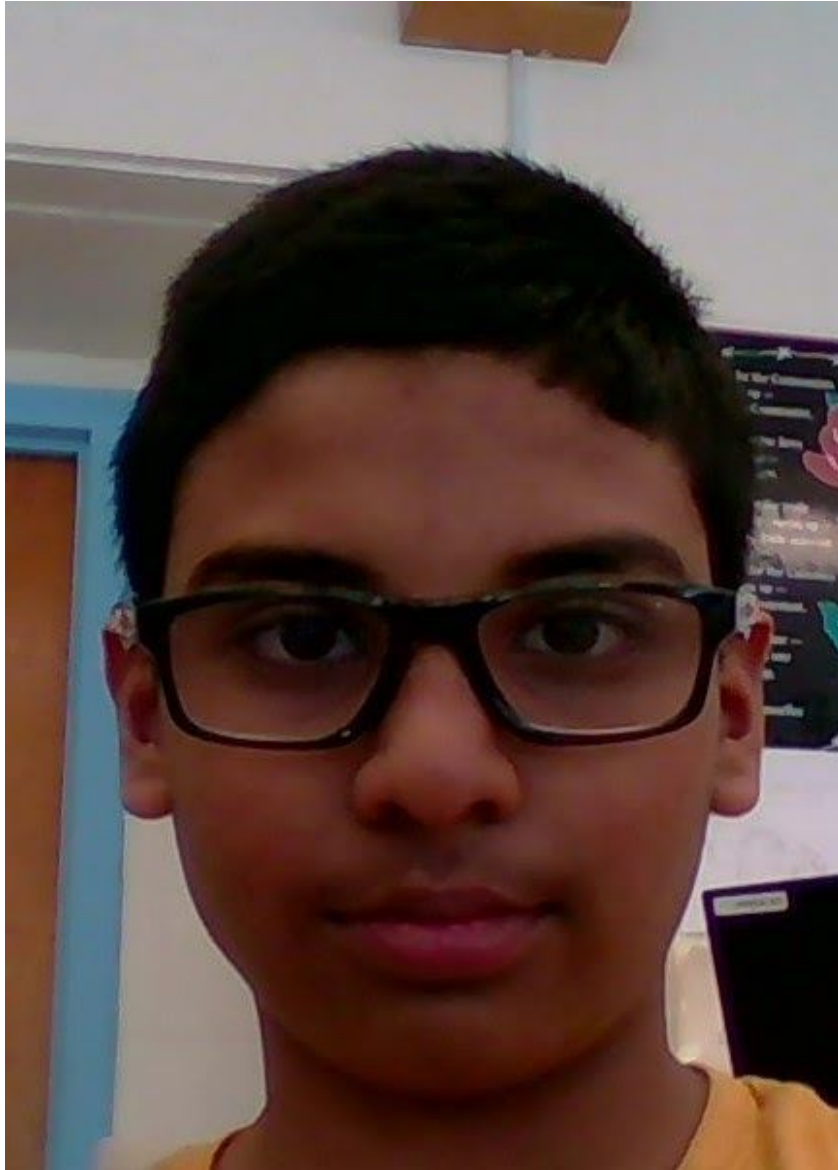
Add a comment...

Post



Philadelphia | photo by E. L.

Democracy can be messy and blacked out, layered with opposing view points and weathered ideas attached to the back of a signpost.



When asked to take a photo of a person who represents democracy in his own life, this student from New Hampshire, submitted a photo of himself. He wrote:

**This is me. I have the freedom to be who I want to, like what I want, do what I want. I can just be me, with no restrictions.**



**ourdemocracy • Following**  
Oriental, North Carolina



**ourdemocracy** Pamlico County, North Carolina | Photo by @will.conkwright a migraine sufferer grateful for access to medication in #ourdemocracy.  
#Pamlico county | #northcarolina

140w



**21 likes**

NOVEMBER 12, 2016



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ourdemocracy • Following



ourdemocracy Memphis | Photo by Kaderrius Campbell. "This is a representation of a student led walk-out to show respect and bring awareness to the school shooting in Florida. Our entire school came out and made a circle, then gave 17 minutes of silence for those who were killed and their families. This is a prime example of the type of community our nation should have and if everyone can have this mentality and respect to others then the world can be a better place, thus making democracy a better system of government for equity." #ourdemocracy #memphis @pulitzercenter @catchlight.io @noorimages @kaderrius\_

57...



Liked by Pulitzercenter and 87 others

JUNE 16, 2018

Add a comment...

Post





Mississippi | photo by J.G.

While walking down the Ole Miss streets I saw construction workers outside in the blazing hot working and sweating trying to finish their main objective and that was to finish working on the side of the road. I asked the workers could I take a picture of them and they politely said yes before I took the picture he went into detail about how many people typically aren't interested in their work and what they do sometimes goes unnoticed. I thought it was amazing because most of the time in life it's the small things that changes or help people cope with their day and could potentially change their life.



Starkville, MS | photo by G.N.

Starkville Pride was one of the most controversial. In 2018, Mississippi allowed them to host the first ever pride parade in the state. As a result, a lot of people celebrated, but a lot of people despised the idea. In a world where people are terrified to openly be their true selves, we must stand together and make sure their voices are heard too.



Mississippi | photo by D.R.

A road leads to differing areas in a small town. Like democracy, the future could take a variety of directions, but with the right leadership, it can become something enjoyable for everyone.



Oyster River, NH | photo by S. C.

Small things for people may be big for others. My family has always had one big discussion about something that would change the world for a lot of newcomers, which is the house pricing. Many of the houses cost a fortune for families living of their graduate student salary. The apartments shown are some of the places that families in the university were staying. However, they are getting cut down and the university is making them move out. This is a very big issue for many people as our family use to live here and relied on these buildings.



Oxford, Mississippi | photo by Z.K.

When I think of a place that represents what democracy means to me, I think of somewhere where I can use my voice with the potential to be heard. Journalism is the heart of being able to voice your opinion and express your thoughts, with an audience waiting to listen. What better place to express the sense of democracy than a school of Journalism.



St. Louis, MO | photo by Z.K.

Art can be considered one the most beautiful forms of expression. Not only does art allow the artist freedom of expression, but it gives people the freedom to express themselves through the art of others and allows them the freedom to interpret art how they please. Democracy is all about freedom of expression and different ways to express yourself.



Oxford, Mississippi | photo by J.W.

This picture is James Meredith head looking on towards the building that has the words "Courage" carved on the top of the building. It reminds us how James Meredith fought hard to gain freedom and justice to become the first African American to attend the University of Mississippi. He never gave up and continued to fight until justice was served.



Oyster River, New Hampshire | photo by J.B.

This place represents democracy in my life because the people of Durham because people voted to clean and take care of the trails. I love to hike in the sweet trails with my friends.





Oyster River, NH | E. P.

Faith brings community together. Church is a safe place to celebrate your religion, in my community. Democracy gives us the freedom to go to a church and chose what religion that we celebrate. In my community you can choses what religion that you believe in or to not have a religion, and you won't be judged.

# Reading Robert Frank's *Parade*

Time requirement: 10 to 55 minutes, depending on grade level

**Invitation:** Robert Frank's *Parade* is an iconic photograph Andrea frequently includes in her presentations about the Our Democracy project. Take a closer look at Frank's photograph to understand the story it conveys about the American experience.

**SWBAT:** Read and interpret narrative and meaning in a photograph through the application of historical context and an analysis of visual elements, photographic composition and style.

Documentary photographer Robert Frank's epochal book *The Americans* is one of great works that inspired Andrea to pursue the Our Democracy project. Like the Our Democracy team, Frank traveled thousands of miles between the east and west coasts of the United States documenting American life. Although the book was published in 1958, its power and significance is still undeniable today.

For Andrea, *Parade* is one photo that stands out amongst others in Frank's provocative collection. Spend some time reading and reflecting on the photograph with your students. What story does it tell? And what might it say about American democracy?

## Additional starter resources for *The Americans*

### Curriculum guide from The Museum of Contemporary Photography

[https://www.mocp.org/pdf/education/MoCP\\_Ed-Robert\\_Frank.pdf](https://www.mocp.org/pdf/education/MoCP_Ed-Robert_Frank.pdf)

### Collection about Robert Frank from The New Yorker

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/how-robert-franks-photographs-helped-define-america>

### Resources from LensCulture

<https://www.lensculture.com/articles/robert-frank-the-americans>

### Smithsonian Video about The Americans

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/videos/category/arts-culture/inside-robert-franks-the-americans/>

### Teachers Guide from the Milwaukee Art Museum

[https://mam.org/streetseen/pdfs/MAM\\_streetseen\\_teacher-guide.pdf](https://mam.org/streetseen/pdfs/MAM_streetseen_teacher-guide.pdf)



*Parade Hoboken, New Jersey, 1955. From The Americans © Robert Frank*

### Reading and Discussion Questions

1. At first glance, what stands out most to you in this photograph, and why?
2. How does this photograph make you feel?
3. Name all the things captured in this photograph. Of all these things, which do you think Frank has drawn the most attention to and why?
4. Who do you see in this photograph? Where are they? What are they doing? And what else do you notice about the way Frank has photographed them?
5. In his introduction to Frank's book *The Americans*, American writer Jack Kerouac said, "Robert Frank...he sucked a sad poem right out of America onto film, taking rank among the tragic poets of the world."
  - a. What do you think is poetic about this photo?
  - b. What story do you think this photo might tell?
6. Imagine that Frank is answering the Our Democracy project's main question "What does democracy look like?" What do you think he might be saying about democracy through this particular photograph, the story and symbolism within it, and its title, *Parade*?
7. Finally, research Robert Frank and the historical context that surrounds this photograph. Use the information you find to further your interpretation of this photo.

# E.B. White’s “The Meaning of Democracy”

Time Required: 25 - 55 minutes, depending on grade level

**Invitation:** Andrea gives presentations about the Our Democracy project around the globe and often shares American writer E.B. White’s “The Meaning of Democracy” with her audiences. Read his words. What is he saying about democracy?

**SWBAT:** Determine an author’s message through the application of historical context and interpretation of imagery and metaphor.

E.B. White’s original piece was published in *The New Yorker*:

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/double-take/e-b-white-on-the-meaning-of-democracy>

We’ve also included his text and reading questions for students on the next page.

Here are a few starter resources to help guide your planning and instruction:

**“Author E.B. White On ‘The Meaning Of Democracy’”:**

<https://www.npr.org/2012/11/07/164631081/author-e-b-white-on-the-meaning-of-democracy>

**Historian Jon Meacham on E.B. White and American Democracy**

<https://lithub.com/jon-meacham-on-e-b-white-and-american-democracy/>

***On Democracy* by E.B. White, edited by Martha White**

<https://www.harpercollins.com/products/on-democracy-e-b-white?variant=32127989710882>

**A Review of *On Democracy***

<https://www.csmonitor.com/Books/Book-Reviews/2019/0627/E.B.-White-s-essays-argue-eloquently-against-extremism>

**Martha White on “E.B. White’s Timeless Words on Democracy”** (“The Meaning of Democracy” at 22:13.)

<https://shapingopinion.com/e-b-whites-timeless-words-on-democracy-episode-81/>

**Resources from the National WWII Museum** <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers>

**The War** (a documentary about America’s WWII involvement by Ken Burns)

<https://www.pbs.org/thewar/>

## “The Meaning of Democracy”

*This piece originally appeared in the Notes and Comment section of the July 3, 1943, issue of The New Yorker.*

We received a letter from the Writers’ War Board the other day asking for a statement on “The Meaning of Democracy.” It presumably is our duty to comply with such a request, and it is certainly our pleasure.



Surely the Board knows what democracy is. It is the line that forms on the right. It is the don’t in don’t shove. It is the hole in the stuffed shirt through which the sawdust slowly trickles; it is the dent in the high hat. Democracy is the recurrent suspicion that more than half of the people are right more than half of the time. It is the feeling of privacy in the voting booths, the feeling of communion in the libraries, the feeling of vitality everywhere.

Democracy is a letter to the editor. Democracy is the score at the beginning of the ninth. It is an idea which hasn’t been disproved yet, a song the words of which have not gone bad. It’s the mustard on the hot dog and the cream in the rationed coffee. Democracy is a request from a War Board, in the middle of a morning in the middle of a war, wanting to know what democracy is.

-E.B. White

### **Reading and Discussion Questions:**

1. What lines stand out most to you, and why?
2. What point do you think EB White is making about democracy? Analyze the examples and metaphors he provides. How do they all contribute to his meaning?  
(Teaching suggestion: Approach this question as a jigsaw activity. Assign each line to specific students who’ll share their analyses during discussion.)
3. What is White’s tone in this piece? How does it shift throughout? And what rhetorical purpose do these shifts serve?
4. Consider White’s overall message. Do you agree with his analysis? Does his description of democracy still apply today?

## Re-writing “The Meaning of Democracy” for today:

Time requirement: 30-55 minutes, depending on grade level

**Invitation:** E.B.White was far from the first or the last to write about the meaning of democracy. Scholars, writers and artists from this century and centuries before have put forth countless descriptions, definitions and analyses of democracy. What do you have to say about it? Write your own version of E.B. White “The Meaning of Democracy.”

**SWBAT** Use figurative language and imagery to write descriptively and to creatively compose an argument about the complex applications of the principles and ideals of democracy in civic life today.

The project’s central question “What does democracy look like?” invites responders to begin thinking about democracy in more visual ways.

This writing exercise challenges students to delve deeper into their visual inquiry into the state of democracy today and into their personal conceptualizations of democracy, as well. It builds on the activities that have preceded it on this classroom playlist and can prepare students for the Our Democracy projects that follow in this toolkit. Through this activity, students will also have a chance to practice using figurative language and creating poetic imagery.

Use the following worksheet of Our Democracy sentence-starters to help students begin pre-writing for their own versions of E.B. White’s “The Meaning of Democracy.”

And in case it might be helpful as an example for your students, here is journalist Rick Hampson’s 2016 take on “The Meaning of Democracy” for USA TODAY:

[From EB White to Colin Kaepernick : What does Democracy Mean Today?](#)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Our Democracy Imagery

Begin brainstorming material you can use to write your own 21st century version of E.B. White's "The Meaning of Democracy." Complete at least 25 of the following sentences starters. Like White, you'll create concrete imagery to describe democracy as you see it, figuratively and/or literally. You may write about democracy as you believe it should be. You may also write about democracy as you observe it has become in your community or country. Use original similes, metaphors, personification and other poetic devices you'd like to employ in your descriptions.

Our democracy is \_\_\_\_\_

Our democracy is the feeling of \_\_\_\_\_

Our democracy looks like \_\_\_\_\_ (a person)

Our democracy looks like \_\_\_\_\_ (a place)

Our democracy looks like \_\_\_\_\_ (an object)

Our democracy looks like \_\_\_\_\_ (an event)

Our democracy sounds like...

Our democracy smells like...

Our democracy tastes like...

Our democracy lives in...

Our democracy sits on...

Our democracy eats...

Our democracy hides...

Our democracy whispers...

Our democracy rises...

Our democracy laughs...

Our democracy impersonates...

Our democracy collapses...

Our democracy comes from...

Our democracy gives birth to...

Our democracy cooks...

Our democracy fades...

Our democracy walks...  
Our democracy stomps...  
Our democracy feeds...  
Our democracy builds...  
Our democracy dances...  
Our democracy grows...  
Our democracy plays..  
Our democracy forgets...  
Our democracy wears...  
Our democracy sleeps...  
Our democracy bleeds...  
Our democracy fights...  
Our democracy is found...  
Our democracy watches...  
Our democracy writes...  
Our democracy takes...  
Our democracy gives...  
Our democracy is ...  
Our democracy is...  
Our democracy is...



# Our Democracy Photography Walk

Time requirement: 60 minutes to a full day field trip

**Invitation:** Contribute your own photographic response to the question “What does democracy look like?” for the Our Democracy Instagram feed and website.

**SWBAT:** apply their new understandings of the principals and ideas of democracy to document and evaluate its connection to and levels of realization in their daily lives and communities through photography and writing.

Andrea Bruce and her team invite students to submit photos that visualize their answers to the question “What does democracy look like?”

Their photos will be featured on the [Our Democracy Instagram](#) feed, [PhotoWings](#) website and/or showcased on the [digital map](#) the team has created with the National Writing Project.

Photography walks are a powerful way for students and teachers to move learning beyond classroom walls. Take your students on a walk through a nearby neighborhood or organize a field trip around town or to the closest city, where they can use their camera lenses to document and inquire into the connection between democracy and community.

Through their photographs, students are encouraged to make their own unique statements about or assessments of the state of democracy today and to explore issues, principles and ideas within democracy in literal and/or figurative ways. Students should also caption their photos and explain what they believe they’ve captured about democracy in each photo they submit.

For examples of finished work, students can revisit the photos featured in Lesson #3 in this toolkit, the Our Democracy Gallery Walk. It may also be helpful for students to use their own responses on the Our Democracy Imagery worksheet from Lesson #6 as a conceptual map for their photo walk.

## Photography Walk Assignment:

What do *you* think democracy looks like? What examples of your definition of democracy exist within the people, places, and events in the community around you? Or, do real world representations of your definition of democracy even exist? If not, what do you see in its place? Answer these questions through at least 3 different photos:

1. Photograph a person/group that embodies your personal definition of what democracy should be or what you think democracy has become in some way.
2. Photograph a place or an event that represents democracy as you see it in your community.
3. Photograph an object that symbolizes what democracy means to you.

Finally, write a caption for each photo that tells a story or explains what you believe you've captured about democracy.

As a conclusion for this lesson, create a gallery using the photos your students have taken. Facilitate an activity similar to the gallery walk and discussion described in Lesson #3 in this toolkit, the Our Democracy Gallery Walk.

And please don't forget to upload your students' work to the Our Democracy and National Writing Project Map at <https://writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy> .

# Our Democracy Family Album:

## What does democracy look like in your family?

Time suggested: at least 1 week (students and their families will need time to gather photos)

**Invitation:** What does democracy look like... in your family? Answer this variation on our project's central question through your family photos and stories.

**SWBAT:** document and evaluate the application of the principles and ideals in American democracy in contemporary, domestic life through photography and writing.

"What does democracy look like?" The Our Democracy team has spent the last few years traveling the country in search of answers to this question.

On our journey, we've visited American communities, homes and schools in every region of the country, meeting people from very diverse socio-cultural backgrounds living within very different circumstances. But we've also considered how democracy has figured into our families' experiences and impacted our lives and histories on a personal level.

Each journalist on our team explored the question "What does democracy look like in my family?" through their family photos. See what we learned:

### [The Our Democracy Team's Family Photo Album](#)

The Our Democracy team now invites you and your students to produce your own family photo collection in response to the question "What does democracy look like in your family?"

There are a variety of ways to approach this project with your students. Feel free to follow the suggested steps outlined on the following pages, or adapt the project for success in your own context.

Here are some resources from [PhotoWings](#) about the importance of family photos:

**Reasons to Care about Family Albums** <http://photowings.org/reasons-to-care-about-family-albums/>

**Reasons to Care about Family Albums, Part 2** <https://vimeo.com/386370949>

**Archiving Images** <http://photowings.org/archiving-images-historys-primary-sources/>

**Preserving Family Photos**

<http://photowings.org/preserving-photographs-family-albums-and-professional-archives/>

## **Instructional Plan for Our Democracy Family Album Project**

First, we encourage you to take time to discuss each of these unique family photo examples from Andrea, Rebecca and Lorraine with your students.

Our team is proud to represent a diversity of cultures and American experiences, and we hope our family photo collections provide a source of inspiration to students as they begin to imagine creating their own. Discussing each example with students may prepare your class for the different themes within democracy that might reveal themselves in students' own family stories and give students the opportunity to see different storytelling structures and packaging options they can use for their projects.

Additionally, we will be adding more examples for students to consider throughout the next few weeks as more people submit their collections to our team.

### **Guided Viewing Questions for Family Photo Collection Examples**

1. How do these photos make you feel?
2. What stands out most to you in this family photo collection?
3. Do the photos focus on one central family member or various family members?
4. Where were these photos taken? Where is this family from?
5. What time periods are covered in this photo series? (Are the photos from the past and/or present? Are the photos from one specific event in this family's story?)
6. How do the photos seem to be sequenced? (Are they in chronological or causal order? Are all the photos organized around a specific theme? Is there a dramatic arc? Are there juxtapositions?)
7. Do any themes or symbols stand out in this photo series?
8. What story does the photo collection seem to tell about this person's family? And, can you relate to this person's family story in any way?
9. Based on the photo series, what does democracy look like in this family? Or, in what ways has democracy or the principles and ideals of democracy figured into this person's family story?
10. Did you learn anything new about history, family, photography, or democracy through this family photo collection?

After reviewing these examples, students will be ready to begin assembling their own family photo collection. We encourage students to follow the editorial steps on the next pages as they select, sequence, and caption their own family photos.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Our Democracy Family Album: Step-by-Step Student Checklist

1. \_\_\_ Begin by sifting through as many family photos that are available to you. Ask your family for help locating photos. They can be photos taken by anyone within or even outside of your family. The photos you include can be old or more recent or you could even take new ones yourself.
2. \_\_\_ Create a separate smaller pile of photos that you think might relate to this assignment and the central question: "What does democracy look like in my own family?" This pile can include new photos you've taken for this project, too.
3. \_\_\_ Now, read and further reflect on each of the photos you've gathered. What do you think they are telling you about how democracy has impacted or figured into your family's story? Do one or two of your family members seem to be most affected or involved in the story of democracy in your family? Write down all your thoughts and ideas. What is the most powerful and truthful story could you tell?
4. \_\_\_ Consider all the thoughts and ideas you've jotted down. And decide which of them might be the most interesting or powerful way to answer the question "What does democracy look like in my family?" and which photos most strongly support the true family story you've chosen to tell.
5. \_\_\_ After you've selected the photos you want to include, sequence the photos in an order that best tells a story about democracy through your family's experience.
6. \_\_\_ Write captions for each of the photos you've selected.
7. \_\_\_ Now you're ready to decide how you'd like to package, present and publish your family photo collection. Ask your teacher for the directions you'll need to follow in order to finish your project.
8. \_\_\_ After you've completely finished your family photo collection, upload your work to the Our Democracy and NWP Map at <https://writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy> with the help of your teacher.

## **Creative Guidelines for Our Democracy Family Album Project**

### **Origins of the Family Photographs in the Collection:**

Students can examine the impact democracy has had on their family in the past or the present, or some combination of both. Therefore, their photo collections may be comprised of any combination of original old photographs, recent photographs, or even totally new photographs the students take for this assignment, an option that might work especially well for students who don't have access to family photos. All photos, however, must be original photographs, not archival photos from outside media sources. Students may include photos taken by anyone within or even outside of their family--as long as they are original and represent something significant to their family.

### **Packaging and Presenting the Family Photo Collection**

We invite teachers and students to use their imaginations. The photos students choose to include in their collection can be packaged in a variety of ways, i.e. as simple as a photo collection with captions on powerpoint slides; scanned pages of a paper-based album or scrapbook the kids make; an audio photo slideshow; an Instagram story; a personal essay with accompanying photos integrated throughout much like one would see in a magazine; a multipage, mixed-media collage of photos, text and other materials; a series of photo dioramas; a documentary style short video that features family members telling stories about each of the photos selected; or even a simple photo essay or photo series exported as a pdf. The level of production students and teachers want to attempt is totally up to them. However, in the end, all assignments must be adaptable to and viewable in some sort of digital format in order for us to post the finished pieces online on the Our Democracy education website.

### **Narrative Organization of the Family Photo Collection: Sequence and Story**

Finally, teachers and students can choose to organize the images, stories and information in their photo collection however they decide is most appropriate. The photo collection could tell a clear story with a narrative arc and specific central characters from their family. The photos could be organized around a theme or issue within democracy that is relevant to their family story. The photo collections could utilize metaphor and symbolism by using only images of objects and places from their family history. At the most basic level of production, students could simply present a collection of photos with captions that don't need to be united or sequenced together in any particular way. This presentation option might be best for younger students or students who may have such a random and/or disparate and/or limited collection of photos to start that it could be difficult for them to find a clear throughline or narrowed focus.

## Our Democracy Multimedia, Community Journalism Projects

Time required: 1 - 4 weeks

**Invitation:** Document your own community stories about democracy using words, photography, and video—the same three mediums used by the Our Democracy team.

**SWBAT:** explore themes and issues related to democracy while developing skills in critical thinking, writing, research, visual and news literacies, and collaboration through the production of multimedia storytelling projects.

The Our Democracy team has spent the last few years searching for stories that might help answer the question “What does democracy look like?” It’s a big question that we have approached by learning about and documenting the everyday experiences of people and places especially impacted by specific democratic themes and issues:

Land Rights - Change - Leadership / Authority - Community - the Press - Work - Schools - Incarceration - the Justice System - Religion / Morality - Gun Rights - Gun violence - Immigration - War / Defense - Patriotism - Native Americans - Slavery - Race - Class - Gender - Borders - Climate - Civic engagement - Agriculture - Patriotism - Police -Capitalism - Voting - Activism - Access - Funding - Healthcare - Local Governance - Home - Individualism - Collectivism - Diversity - Freedom & more...

We invite you to lead your students through the production of their own multimedia stories exploring the democratic themes and issues on this list or others significant to your community.

Students should tell these stories from a local or hyper localized perspective, away from national politics, and through powerful, personal narratives that center on the life experiences and/or work of people from their very own neighborhoods and communities.

Their finished storytelling projects can be published on [Our Democracy’s NWP Map](#). And select student work will be featured on [Our Democracy’s Instagram](#) account and on the [PhotoWings](#) website.

As you begin production, we encourage you and your students to learn from finished multimedia storytelling projects. Here is a folder containing examples of stories in every documentary medium used by the Our Democracy team -- written word, photography and video.

### [Multimedia Storytelling Samples and Teaching Resources](#)

Each of these pieces explores specific themes and issues within democracy through local, human-centered stories. Our aim was to include examples that might be easier for students to reproduce. Among the examples in the folder, you’ll find:

**Our Democracy's Memphis Dispatch:** a short, vignette-style, profile piece that includes photography by Andrea Bruce and writing by Rebecca Sanchez, originally produced for a social media audience. The piece profiles William Golden, a 24-year-old philosopher in his own right, who the team met through the re-entry program Lifeline for Success.

**Raising the 1.5%:** a vertical video story produced by Lorraine Ustaris, specifically for students, as an example of the type of story they might be able to find next door, on their own streets, in their own communities. Just like students will have to do, Lorraine reported this piece on foot, in the Pennsylvania neighborhood where she spent her adolescence. She spoke to neighbors she'd never met until she found the immigrant family featured in this video story.

And finally two storytelling examples from other National Geographic projects:

**Stonewall at 50: Stories of Resistance and Resilience:** a multimedia project by Robin Hammond featuring an anthology of photos, videos and interviews with members of LGBTQ communities in the United States and individuals who share their firsthand accounts of the events at the Stonewall Inn on June 28, 1969.

**The Last Prom:** a short documentary and multimedia project about the impact of climate change and environmental racism, told through the experiences of students in Flint, Michigan celebrating their last prom together as the city closes schools. The project, produced by a team of five, is a great example of how documentary journalists can focus their lens on a major social issue by telling the story of that issue through the experiences of one person or particular group of people. It is also an example of the kinds of powerful stories student journalists might be able to find in their own schools.

Undertaking these kinds of multimedia journalism projects requires considerable production time and classroom collaboration, but the potential for maximized student learning is great.

### **More Storytelling and Production Resources**

We'll be creating more resources about media production just for students over the next few months. We'll add them to the folder above, to our website and send them to you through NWP's monthly newsletter. They'll include quick tips for photography, neighborhood reporting, finding stories, interviewing, filming b-roll and sequences, scripting, writing, fact-checking, journalism ethics and more.

In the appendix for this toolkit, we've also collected short lists of excellent photography and video storytelling resources from PhotoWings and other media education organizations for your reference. They include thorough production and editing guides and video tutorials. You'll find them on the concluding pages of this toolkit.



## Here are 2 more, quick project-based learning options...

### **Keepers of Our Democracy: Conducting Interviews**

The Our Democracy team's first stories will be released as a monthly web-series on National Geographic. The series will focus on the unsung "keepers of our democracy" we've met throughout our reporting and travels.

We invite students in your class to practice their interviewing skills with one another by asking each other the following questions on camera:

1. Name a person you know who serves the community in some way.
2. How do you know this person?
3. What exactly does this person do to serve the community? What makes this person a "keeper of democracy"?
4. Describe this person in greater detail, and if you can, or share a story or a memory you have of them.
5. Is there anything else you want to tell me about this person that I haven't asked you already?

After they've completed filming, edit their interviews together and post your students' interviews as a single class collection on [www.writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy](http://www.writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy).

### **My Democracy: an Annotated Multimedia Autobiography**

Where do your beliefs and understandings of democracy come from? In Memphis, Tennessee, our team met William Golden, a member of a prisoner reentry group, who is now dedicated to continuing his own education and seizing opportunities to educate others. "The only reason why I'm so into politics is because of hip hop," he told us, crediting late rapper Tupac Shakkur's music for broadening his perspectives and moving him to better understand his own life and social context.

For this project, ask each student to...

- 1) Identify at least 7 cultural events, figures, texts or artifacts (images, books, art, music, media, celebrities, etc...) that have shaped their understandings of democracy, for better or worse, or anywhere in between.
- 2) Compile a list of web links that lead to the cultural items they've identified as influences and write a reflective annotation about each entry.
- 3) Build a web page or interactive document for their annotated multimedia autobiography that collects and presents all of their annotations and web links.
- 4) Post it on [www.writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy](http://www.writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy).

Once all students have completed their annotated multimedia autobiography, organize a digital gallery walk whereby the class can review and examine the origins of their beliefs collectively.



**Our**

# DEMOCRACY

## **APPENDIX**

### **Media Education Resources**

News/Media Literacy

Visual Literacy

Photography

Video Storytelling

### **Media Consent / Release**

### **Contact Information**

## Media Education Resources

We hope this short list of resources from [PhotoWings](#) and other media education organizations offers you the support you need as you begin activities and projects in the Our Democracy Toolkit.

### NEWS AND MEDIA LITERACY

The Our Democracy team looks forward to including student and community journalism in our project and on the interactive reporting map we've built with the National Writing Project. We urge all contributors to our project and learning communities engaging with the lessons in this toolkit to equip themselves with critical and fundamental news and media literacy skills: discerning fact from opinion; fact-checking; finding and using reliable sources of information; recognizing fake news; evaluating the quality and veracity of news reports and journalistic content; and practicing journalistic ethics and principles.

Here are a few trusted websites, schools and institutions dedicated to news and media literacy education:

<https://newslit.org/>

<https://www.spj.org/ethicscode.asp>

<https://www.nytimes.com/editorial-standards/ethical-journalism.html>

<https://trustingnews.org/hownewsworks/why-news-matters/>

<https://www.commonsense.org/education/articles/news-literacy-resources-for-classrooms>

<https://nieman.harvard.edu/articles/news-literacy-what-not-to-do/>

<https://thetrustproject.org/>

<https://www.newseum.org/>

<https://www.centerfornewsliteracy.org/>

<https://www.poynter.org/>

[https://archives.cjr.org/news\\_literacy/](https://archives.cjr.org/news_literacy/)

<https://www.americanpressinstitute.org/youth-news-literacy/resources/>

## **VISUAL LITERACY**

Many of the lessons in the toolkit engage students in reading photos and other visual literacy exercises. Before students begin these activities, it might be helpful for them to have more introductory, guided and independent practice.

Here is a great collection of content from PhotoWings about reading photography and visual literacy: <http://photowings.org/pwau-visual-literacy/>

And here are a few more resources for teaching visual literacy:

<https://www.literacyideas.com/teaching-visual-texts-in-the-classroom>

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/ccia-10-visual-literacy-strategies-todd-finley>

<https://www.readingthepictures.org/>

<https://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/10-intriguing-photographs-to-teach-close-reading-and-visual-thinking-skills/>

<http://search.readwritethink.org/?q=%22visual%20literacy%22>

<https://www.philamuseum.org/teacherresources?page=1>

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/learning/teachers-and-schools/teaching-english-and-drama/how-to-read-a-painting>

## **PHOTOGRAPHY RESOURCES**

PhotoWings has created an online photography resource center offering a long list of links to online photo galleries, photography networks, online courses, workshops and much more:

<http://photowings.org/resource-center/>

Their site also offers an archive of lessons and curricular materials for teaching photography that PhotoWings created in collaboration with Photoville:

<http://photowings.org/photovilleedu-education-partnership/>

One of my favorite content portals on the PhotoWings website is the video library that features interviews and photography tips from some of the world's greatest photographers:

<http://photowings.org/videos/>

The collection includes a video profile of Andrea Bruce, in which she shares some photography tips from the field : <https://vimeo.com/138359455>

The video portal also includes this special piece featuring eight renowned photographers who speak "about the art and importance of visual storytelling. With a wealth of experience between them, they discuss what it means to them, how they do it, and what they are able to accomplish with it." : <http://photowings.org/visual-storytelling-foundry-photojournalism-workshop/>

## VIDEO STORYTELLING / PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Video production and editing can be a very involved process, but luckily there is a wealth of online resources from filmmakers and media education organizations, schools, and production companies. There are even resources created specifically with youth filmmakers in mind. We've listed a few helpful websites and pages below, including links to resources from various youth media organizations with whom Lorraine has worked, including the WHY Y Media Commons, the PBS NewsHour Student Reporting Lab, and Free Spirit Media.

The Our Democracy team will also be creating more resources around media production just for students over the next few months. We'll add them to [this folder](#), to our websites and send them to you through NWP's monthly newsletter. They'll include quick tips for photography, neighborhood reporting, finding stories, interviewing, filming b-roll and sequences, scripting, writing, fact-checking, journalism ethics and more.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/whyphila>

<https://studentreportinglabs.org/tutorials/>

<https://phillycam.org/>

<https://freespiritmedia.org/>

<https://indiana.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/45812752-8486-4096-a875-6301097f22e5/classroom-video-production/>

<https://www.apple.com/education/docs/Apple-Moviemakingcurriculum.pdf>

<http://archive.pov.org/behindthelens/lesson-plan-1/>

<https://teach.kqed.org/media-academy-for-educators>

<https://www.cteonline.org/outlines/z6VxhG/video-production-model>

<https://edex.adobe.com/digital-video>

<https://www.nyfa.edu/student-resources/how-to-prepare-and-conduct-a-documentary-interview/>

## **Our Democracy Project Media Consent**

On the following page, we've provided a copy of Our Democracy's media consent and release form.

Our team requests that 1) all teachers and students participating in the Our Democracy project and 2) all persons whom teachers and students interview, film and photograph as part of this project complete and sign a release form.

If you and your students have any questions about journalistic or documentary situations in which you may or may not need to obtain consent while you are working on reporting assignments for Our Democracy, please read and reference this helpful guide from [The Columbia Journalism Review](#):

[https://www.cjr.org/united\\_states\\_project/can\\_i\\_do\\_that\\_a\\_legal\\_primer\\_for\\_journalists.php](https://www.cjr.org/united_states_project/can_i_do_that_a_legal_primer_for_journalists.php)

**OUR DEMOCRACY MEDIA CONSENT AND RELEASE FORM**

I consent and give permission to **Andrea Bruce’s Our Democracy Project and their education partners, PhotoWings, and the National Writing Project**, (“Producer”) (which, as referenced in this consent and release, includes Producer's affiliates, subsidiaries, licensees, successors and assigns) to film, photograph and record me (the "Footage"), in an interview, discussion, activities, musical performance or otherwise, in connection with the program tentatively entitled Our Democracy (the “Program”), and to use or license others to use, any part of the Footage and any memorabilia and/or other materials provided by me, and my name, voice, likeness and biographical information in the Program in all media worldwide in perpetuity, and in the advertising and promotion of the Program. I understand that no payment is due to me in connection with my participation in the Program. I agree that Producer is the exclusive owner of all copyright and other rights in and to the Program and the Footage. I warrant that any musical compositions I perform in the Footage are my original creations, as to which I am the sole owner of all rights, including copyright, and I grant Producer a non-exclusive license to synchronize and incorporate the compositions into the Program and other uses of the Footage in all media worldwide in perpetuity. I agree not to make any claim against anyone of any nature whatsoever relating to the exercise of the permissions given herein, including but not limited to claims for privacy, publicity, or payment. I waive any right of inspection or approval of my inclusion in the Footage. Producer is under no obligation to make any use of the rights granted therein. All statements I make on-camera I genuinely believe to be true. I understand that, since the Producer is relying on the consent granted herein, it cannot be revoked. I warrant that I am over the age of 18 and free to give this consent and release, which I have read and understand.

Print Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Full Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Social Media: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are a minor (under 18):** Parent/Guardian Signature \_\_\_\_\_

**DO NOT WRITE BELOW THIS LINE – PRODUCERS ONLY** \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCATION/SCENE:**

**SUBJECT DESCRIPTION:**



## CONTACT INFORMATION

Participate and publish work from your classroom  
and learning community on:

[www.writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy](http://www.writingourfuture.nwp.org/ourdemocracy)

Send comments and questions to the Our Democracy team at:

[ourdemocracy@nwp.org](mailto:ourdemocracy@nwp.org)

+

[lorraine.ourdemocracy@gmail.com](mailto:lorraine.ourdemocracy@gmail.com)

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