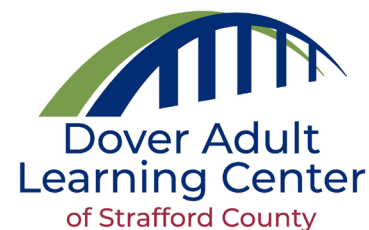


DOVER ADULT LEARNING CENTER NEWSLETTER



Spring 2021 | Volume 19 Issue 1



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR:

In this issue, I've dedicated the front page to an article written by a DALC teacher, Barbara Visciano, for the NH Humanities Council. At a time when many native-born Americans are asking the question, "What does it mean to be an American?", this program allowed new Americans to explore and consider this question through their own experience and that of historical characters. It serves as a reminder of how important it is to examine and reconsider this question repeatedly to build "a more perfect union" and demonstrates the power of literature to engage and inform us about our history and ourselves.

-Deanna Strand

What Does It Mean to be an American?

By Barbara Viscano

"Liberty and Justice for All"

"All Men are Created Equal"

For all Americans, these words ring true as the promises made in the founding of our country.

For those who seek to learn about America, the understanding of what these words mean and how they are demonstrated in our culture is fundamental.

In a recent New Hampshire Humanities (NHH) Connections program requested by Barbara Visciano, teacher of the ESL Civics Reading and Discussion Class at the Dover Adult Learning Center, the concept of liberty and justice in our history was the topic of exploration. Using four picture books during the four week series, facilitator Bill Badgley took these students on an historical journey to four periods in American history during which there were struggles to live up to ideals set forth in our founding documents. He posed the essential question: What is an American?

In the first class, students read *Elizabeth Leads the Way: Elizabeth Cady Stanton* by Tanya Lee Stone and were introduced to this early suffragette and her role in securing the vote for women. Following that, the role of

the Underground Railroad and the injustices of slavery were discussed using *Follow the Drinking Gourd* by Jeanette Winter.

The need to continue addressing the full inclusion of African Americans was brought to light in reading *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* by Andrea Pinkney. *How Baseball Saved Us* by Ken Mochizuki gave students a look at the issue of Japanese Internment in WWII from the perspective of a young boy. Students were delighted to learn that this NHH Connections program allowed them to keep these books to add to their personal libraries.

Discussions led by Bill during the program were rich and probing. Students brought perspective from their native countries and were quick to point out the universal quest for freedom and dignity. They grappled with the question of civil disobedience in the face of cruelty and injustice as during the times of slavery and racial discrimination. "I really like these books because the other books I read say in the United States all men are created equal, but these books tell more of American history," said one student. They recognized the impact of marginalizing groups of people and dismissing the cultures of those who may come from other places.

"It's not just the Japanese that needed to be saved. America needed to be saved to be able to include everyone," was the response of one student after reading *Baseball Saved Us*. "Being in a Japanese internment camp broke their culture," reflected another. Some students read the books to their children and saw in their reactions the suffering of those who were not treated with respect because of their differences. "My children are Chinese children and here in school in America. I read the books to them and my young son cried when he heard about how the Japanese boy in the story was treated. I like when my children learn from the books about everyone being the same," shared student, Lin Huang, in evaluating the

program. Another student, Yaling Liu, is anxious to give her books to her son when she returns to her native country in order to help him understand America. In answer to the question: What is an American? Tereza Leite, a newly naturalized American citizen, commented, "When we feel welcome and a part of the

community, we are American. If I don't feel welcome, I will never really be an American." One could not ask for a simpler or more important truth.

<https://www.nhhumanities.org/news/what-does-it-mean-to-be-an-american>





JUSTIFY WOMEN AND LAWYERS

by Jeniffer Rios Lopez

This picture is Lady Justice. The blindfold represents objectivity and impartiality; she holds scales to represent the weighing of evidence, and the sword represents punishment. This image represents me because I'm a lawyer and I'm a woman.

Since I was little, I have always tried to understand what is fair and what is not. In my culture being a woman is not an easy thing; you have to work harder than men to have or do what you dream or you deserve. I didn't grow up in a male chauvinist family, but I think my culture and society still has a lot to improve on this topic. Being a lawyer and being a woman at this time is

difficult. Definitely a lot of women worked before us, and thanks to them, we have a lot of equality and liberty now; however, when I see the news and the percentage of women who have been victims of domestic violence or when they are abused by the men in their lives, like their family members or bosses at work, it makes me want to change the world and work harder for women's rights.

I'm very thankful to have had the opportunity to go to college and travel outside of my country because this is a way you can learn a lot about others' cultures and try to change or improve your beliefs and thoughts.

This picture also makes me think about justice. Now that I

have studied and traveled, I think that the meaning of this word depends on the way or culture you grew up in. The meaning of justice can change based on each person's perspective.

I really believe and hope that one day I will be able to work and give a hand to a lot of women that need help. People who are my same age and the ones that went to college might have different thoughts about this topic, but I think the majority share the same feeling about this cultural identity.

I think I can find a lot of women and men that want to work for this cause. There are many companies that you can join and develop new meaningful connections to help women in difficult situations. Working against people who abuse women can be difficult, but for me, it is always worth it and makes me feel empowered.

In Our Own Words... is a collection of original writings. In poetry, personal reflection and artwork, students reveal their diversity, as well as their commonality as learners. ■

NEW BOARD MEMBERS



MARK BRAVE

DALC is pleased to welcome Mark to the Board. His background is in Law Enforcement and he hopes to bridge the gap between the Law Enforcement profession and the Communities they serve. His skills are a welcome addition to the DALC Board of Directors.



BARBARA COTTA

DALC is pleased to welcome Barbara to the Board. She works as a consultant and coach to innovators, creators, and entrepreneurs, helping teams to brainstorm and implement their visions. Barb's energy and experience will be an asset to the DALC Board of Directors.

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doveradultlearning.org/support



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