

THE WAIT

From 2006 to 2016, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) granted citizenship to over 6.6 million immigrants. What do you need to become a citizen? How do you apply for citizenship? What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States?

CUP collaborated with Teaching Artist Meredith Degyansky and public high school students from the KAPPA International High School in the Bronx to dig a little deeper into citizenship. Students got out of the classroom and into the middle of the immigration debate to survey their school community and interview key officials on immigration policies. This booklet is a step-by-step guide to citizenship.

What does citizenship mean to you?

Gifty Boanoh
KAPPA student

Brianna Camarena
KAPPA student

Panorea Panagiosoulis
KAPPA principal

Jeffrey Silverio
KAPPA student

"To be a citizen is being a part of a place without barriers that separate you from others."

"Being a citizen is being able to participate in your community."

"A citizen is anyone who follows the laws, contributes to society, and makes the U.S. their home."

"A citizen of the U.S. is surrounded by people of all different cultures and embraces that diversity."

What is your experience with citizenship?

Aracelis Lucero
Masa Executive Director

Jasmine Aponte
KAPPA student

"My parents were the first people to come to the U.S. from their little town in Mexico. [Growing up] we received and housed a lot of new immigrants coming from Mexico. My parents would wake up at 4 am to make breakfast for everyone [...] handmade tortillas because there weren't any tortillas in the city yet. They also helped people find jobs, get secondhand clothes, and organized walks to and from the subway on payday so that people wouldn't get mugged, which was a problem in the 1980s."

"My stepfather arrived in the U.S. 25 years ago. The process wasn't easy. He fled from Cuba with 5 people, crossing the ocean in a raft made of tires. One man on the raft died during the journey from seasickness and dehydration. When [my stepfather] arrived, he became a welder. [It took him] 22 years to become a citizen."

What are the obstacles to becoming a citizen?

Thanu Yakupitiyage
New York Immigration Coalition

Richard Andre
Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs

"The process takes many years. You have to be a permanent resident for 5 years before you can apply."

"Language is a barrier for many because you have to take a test in English."

"The actual application process is pretty difficult and expensive - \$725!"

"There's a lot of uncertainty with the current [presidential] administration. We may lose current protective immigration policies, like sanctuary cities."

What is a sanctuary city?

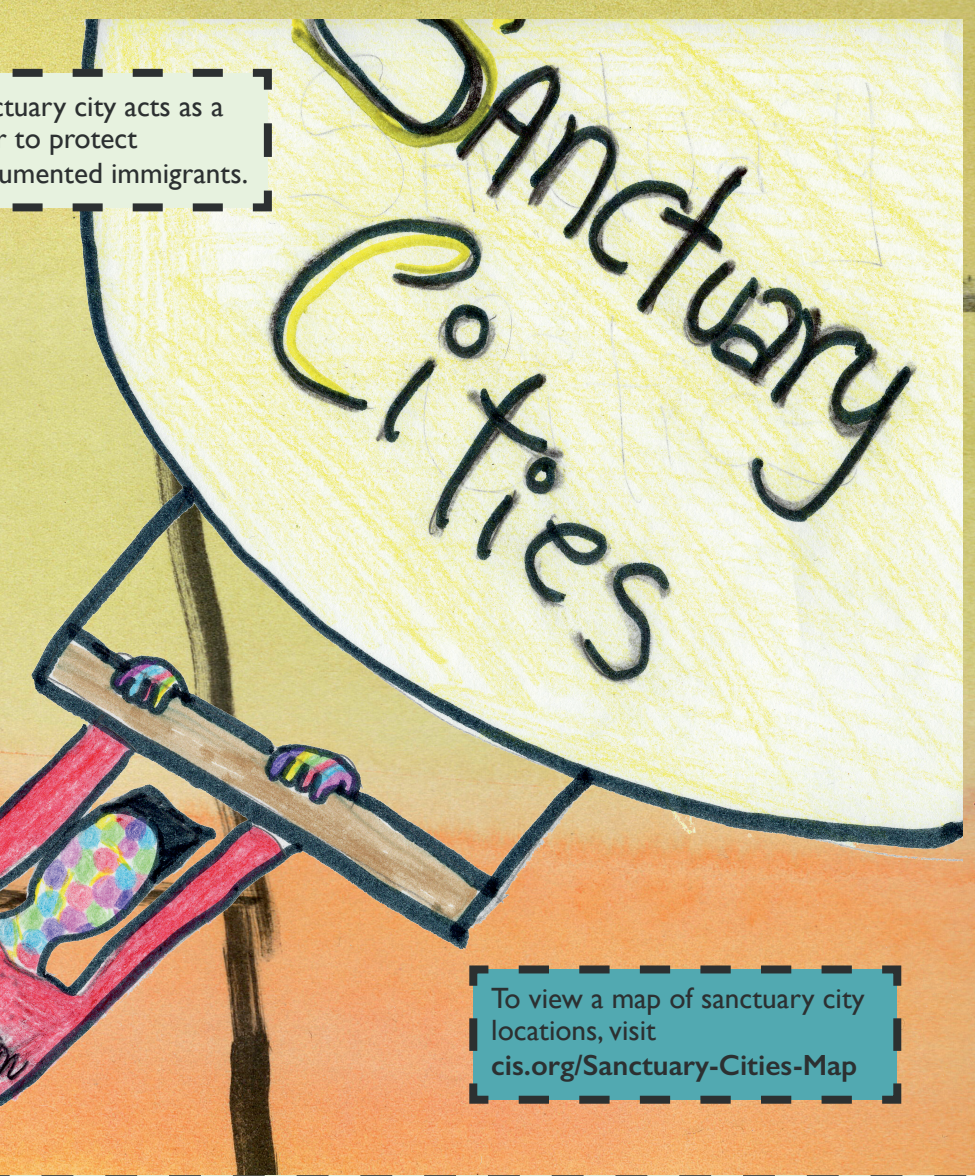
Aracelis Lucero

Thanu Yakupitiyage

"At Masa we think of 'sanctuary' as providing both moral and physical support. We are trying to provide concrete solutions [for immigrants] to make sure [...] that they continue to live their lives."

"It's a city that has policies in place that don't allow the city government to collaborate with Immigration Customs Enforcement (ICE)."

A sanctuary city acts as a shelter to protect undocumented immigrants.



To view a map of sanctuary city locations, visit cis.org/Sanctuary-Cities-Map

STEPS TO CITIZENSHIP

There are many different steps to becoming a U.S. citizen. To view a complete list of pathways, requirements, and application instructions, visit uscis.gov

- 1 If you are not a citizen, you need an immigrant visa called a Green Card to permanently live and work in the U.S. To apply for a Green Card, visit uscis.gov/greencard
- 2 To be eligible for U.S. citizenship, you need to be a permanent resident of the U.S. for 5 years in a row, or 3 years if you are married to a U.S. citizen.
- 3 The process of becoming a U.S. citizen is called naturalization. To begin the naturalization process you need to file an N-400 form and pay a \$725 filing fee to the Department of Homeland Security. For the form, visit uscis.gov/n-400
- 4 USCIS requires naturalization applicants to be fingerprinted for criminal background checks by the FBI. You will receive an appointment letter with the location of the nearest USCIS authorized fingerprint site.
- 5 USCIS will schedule a Naturalization Interview to ask questions about your application, test your English skills, and test your knowledge of U.S. History and Government. For test study materials, visit uscis.gov/citizenship/learners/study-test
- 6 If your application is approved, your last step is to take the Oath of Allegiance to the United States and receive your Certificate of Naturalization!



The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities.

This project is one of CUP's Urban Investigations – project-based afterschool programs in which high school students explore fundamental questions about how the city works. Students collaborate with CUP and Teaching Artists to create multimedia teaching tools that reach audiences in the fields of arts and social justice. To learn more about CUP, visit welcometoCUP.org.

CUP
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Thanu Yakupitiyage

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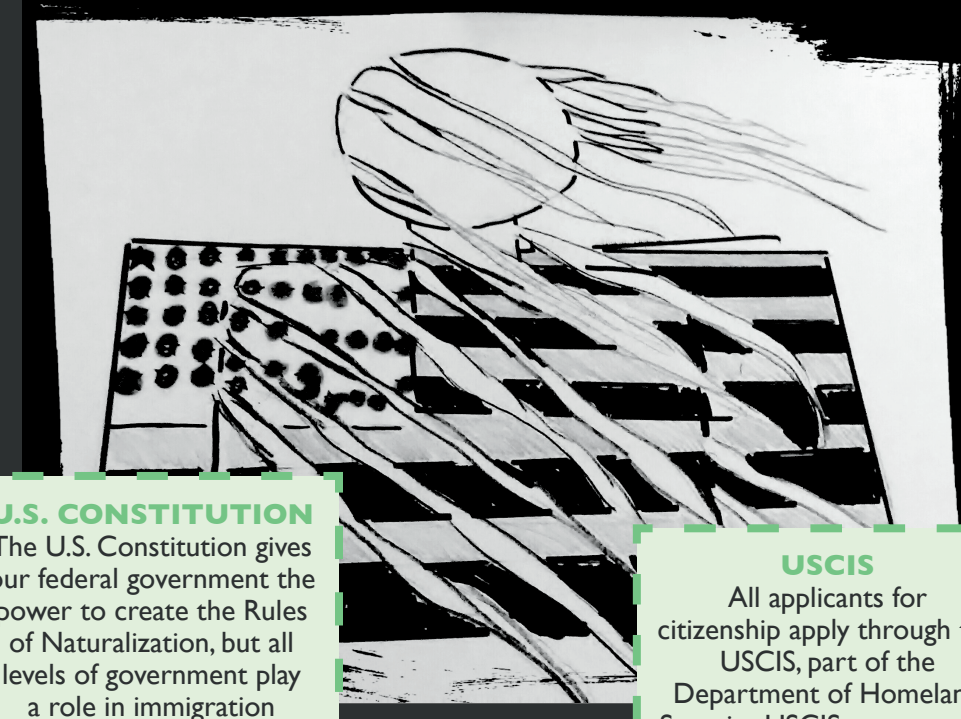
Knowledge and Power Preparatory Academy (KAPPA) International High School is a small public high school in the Bronx dedicated to preparing its students for success in college. KAPPA offers the International Baccalaureate Program for all interested and on-track Juniors and Seniors. To learn more, visit kappainternational.org.

KAPPA
Principal: Panorea Panagiosoulis
Assistant Principal: Casey Smith
Teaching Artist Assistant: Rosa Gil
Students: Jasmine Aponte, Gifti Boanoh,
Brianna Camarena, Natalia Cortez, Laisha Frias,
Asia Ledesma, Alison Murillo, Khadija Rahman,
Nayely Rodriguez, Hawanatu Sillah, Jeffrey Silverio

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Who decides the steps toward citizenship?



U.S. CONSTITUTION
The U.S. Constitution gives our federal government the power to create the Rules of Naturalization, but all levels of government play a role in immigration policies, from the enforcement of immigration laws to the creation of sanctuary cities.

USCIS
All applicants for citizenship apply through the USCIS, part of the Department of Homeland Security. USCIS can approve, question, or deny an application.

What is New York City's role?

NYC Citizenship
The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs offers free legal and city services. For free legal help with citizenship applications and a map of city services available to all New Yorkers, visit nyc.gov/citizenship

IDNYC
New York City offers a free government-issued photo identification card to all New York City residents, regardless of immigration status. To apply for an IDNYC, visit nyc.gov/idnyc

What is the future of citizenship?



WE THE PEOPLE
Citizens have the right to vote in local, state, and federal elections for political parties that support different immigration platforms. Immigration policies and steps to citizenship can change with each elected official. To register to vote, visit rockthevote.com

What is your ideal path to citizenship?

"Congress should decide [the path to citizenship] because that's how our democracy works. Who gets to be a member of our society and how we determine membership is something that has to be done by a democratic process. It may not be perfect, but Congress is highly persuaded by what they hear from [the people]. That's critical because over the years, Congress has passed some extremely restrictive laws because they thought that that's what [the people] wanted. Over time, Congress [can and] has passed more liberal laws."



Rosa Gil
Teaching Assistant



Muzaffar Chishti
Migration Policy Institute

"If one must pay for [citizenship then] it should be made affordable by making the price more relative to family income."

"International college students should be able to apply for permanent residence [so that they can] become citizens [...] after spending some years studying in the U.S."

THE WAIT

What does it mean to be a citizen of the United States of America?



How can you get involved?

To find out ways to take action and help protect the rights of immigrants, visit the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Immigrants' Rights Project at aclu.org

For trainings on immigration rights, visit the National Immigration Law Center at nilc.org

To become an advocate for immigrant youth, visit The Young Center for Immigrant Children's Rights at theyoungcenter.org/act/volunteer

To volunteer with Masa, a South Bronx organization dedicated to empowering and educating immigrants, visit masany.org/volunteers