

**NEW  
MUSEUM**

**KIDS  
MENU**

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## COLLECTIVE WORDS

Nari Ward's 2019 New Museum exhibition "We the People" inspires this activity. You can see images from "Nari Ward: We the People" at the New Museum and hear him speak about the exhibition on our [website](#). The exhibition recently travelled to [MCA Denver](#), and is currently on view through September 20.

### KEY WORDS

- **Citizenship:** status of a person as a member of or belonging to a state or country
- **U.S. Constitution:** the basic written set of principles and precedents of federal government in the U.S. (enacted in 1789 and since modified by amendments)
- **Lettering:** the style used to drawing letters
- **Font:** a set of characters (letters, numbers, punctuation) all of one style

**START WITH ART: Nari Ward**



Artist Nari Ward has lived and worked in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City for many years. He was born in St. Andrew, Jamaica, in 1963 and immigrated to the United States with his family when he was a child. A permanent resident for most of his life, it was not until 2011 that Ward decided to take the steps to gain U.S. **citizenship**. Inspired by this process, he created a work titled “We the People,” the first three words of the United States **Constitution**.

One of the requirements to become a U.S. citizen is to “declare a willingness to support and defend the U.S. and **the Constitution**,” (though this is not a requirement for those who receive citizenship as a birthright in the U.S.).

The Constitution is designed to outline the national government, fundamental laws, and basic rights of citizens. How this document is interpreted and who can participate in upholding it, as well as who is considered a person, a citizen, and/or worthy of human rights protections have each been contested throughout history. Continued tensions between individual and collective rights, and struggles of inequality and oppression based on race, gender, sexuality, indigeneity, ability, class, and immigration status, all impact how the Constitution’s democratic ideals are realized.

- Who do you think are “the people?” Do you feel included in the “we?”
- When do you hear, or say, “we” and feel protected and included? How do you participate as someone in this group?
- This artwork is made with thousands of shoelaces, which are often a

commonly found material. How is this similar to or different from other artmaking materials?

- How do you think the experience of this piece changes when you are close to it, or far away from it? How would your sense of colors, textures, and reading of other details change?
- The **lettering** in this artwork is based on the handwriting of the U.S. Constitution. Is this a type of handwriting you see regularly? Or a **font** you encounter on signs, advertising or a computer? What does it remind you of?

## **Look Around**

- Collect different fonts and lettering you see. You might draw them, or cut them out from magazines or boxes and keep them in a sketchbook, or take photos of signs for reference. How do different kinds of lettering and fonts express different feelings, memories, ideas, and emotions?
- What kinds of handmade or temporary signs in the media and in your neighborhood have you seen lately? How do the way the signs look make you feel? Curious? Cared for? Hopeful? Worried?

## **MAKE ART**

Let's make a sign with words that expresses collective ideas that you believe.

### **Materials**

- Your collection of different fonts and lettering for inspiration from "Look Around."
- A large piece of cardboard. Size can vary, but consider if your sign will be held in your hands, or put on display, and if you want it to be seen from a distance and how. You may use poster board, or a flattened box, cut to a size that is comfortable for your plans.
- Pencil
- Markers or crayons

### ***Optional***

- Glue
- A collection of items that are alike, yet might have some different variations, such as multiple beads, buttons, bottlecaps, ribbons, string, or yarn
- Ruler

## **Making**

1. Brainstorm things that you and people you live with believe in that are rights and protections everyone should have. What makes you feel cared for and protected, that you think all people should have? You may wish to

- do this with a helper or partner. Write a brief statement about one of these beliefs (hint: it may help to start with the word “we”).
2. Decide what style and shape of letters best express your idea. Practice writing: you might design your own unique lettering or use your collection of fonts for inspiration.
  3. Write your statement again in pencil, enlarged and in your chosen style on the cardboard. You may wish to use a ruler to help plan and space the words. Your pencil lines can be light as you experiment with spacing your letters and sketching their shape. You can use an eraser, or leave the lines beneath your final words.
  4. Use markers or crayons to trace the pencil lines you want to keep and make them appear bold. Use colors to help to express your idea.

### ***Optional***

5. Glue small items like beads, buttons or bottlecaps to your letters to add texture and color. You may also thread lace, yarn, or ribbon through holes cut in your cardboard with a helper.

### **REFLECTION**

1. How does your sign look close up and farther away?
2. Do you think your style of lettering expresses your idea? How?
3. Who do you wish could see your sign and how might you share it?
4. How might your sign spark conversations with family, friends, or new people?

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**MUSEUM**

IMAGE:

“Nari Ward: We the People,” 2019. Exhibition view: New Museum, New York. Photo: Maris Hutchinson / EPW Studio

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