Empathy & Connection • A Vision for America at 250

REFLECTION JOURNAL

Why us? America 250 and President Lincoln's Cottage

At President Lincoln's Cottage, we believe in an America that reflects our common humanity, cultivates belonging, and honors the complexity in our nation's history. We are committed to telling more complete stories that capture the full breadth of the American experience and leading our peers and community in doing the same. We're building a 250th commemoration that meets audiences where they are and makes room for both grief and joy at once. Use this resource to reflect on your own history and that of the United States as you, like Lincoln, work to form a more perfect union.

How to use the reflection journal

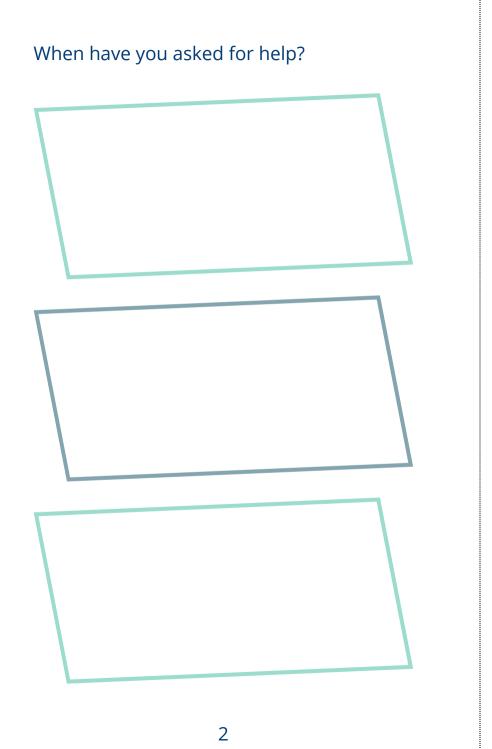
- Print the journal pages on regular 8.5x11 paper or, you can open them on your tablet or other device and add your answers digitally
- Respond to the writing prompts on each page. It's okay to skip pages and return to them later.
- Treat yourself use your favorite pen or some colorful markers or pencils to write in the journal.
- We recommend completing 3-5 prompts in one sitting, but please use this resource as best works for you.

About

These reflection prompts are intended for journalers ages 15 and up. Prompts and questions were developed by President Lincoln's Cottage in partnership with the team at the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. Many thanks also to the participants in our Vision for America at 250 Summit. President Lincoln' Cottage is a 501(c)3 historic site and museum located in Washington DC.







What barriers do you face in forming new connections, or in deepening those you already have?

What about you has stayed the same over the course of your life? What has changed?

How do you decide when to share your whole self?

5

Would other people, if asked about you, have the same answer?

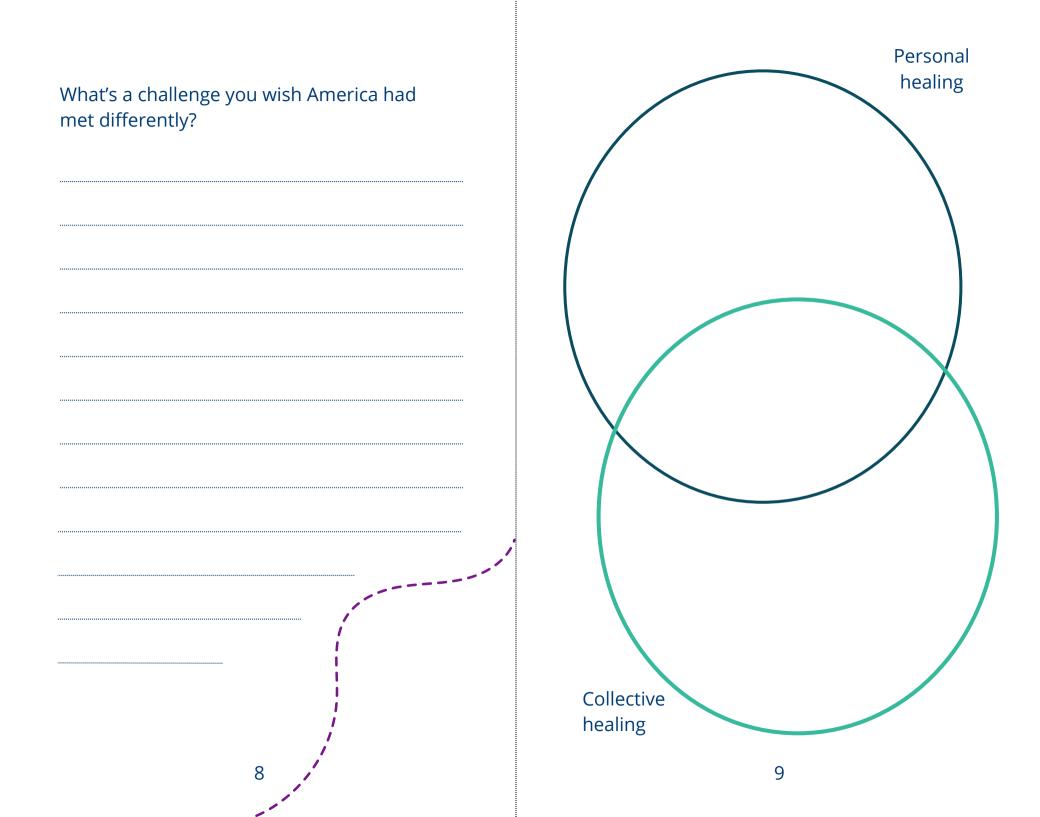
Draw a symbol that represents America to you.

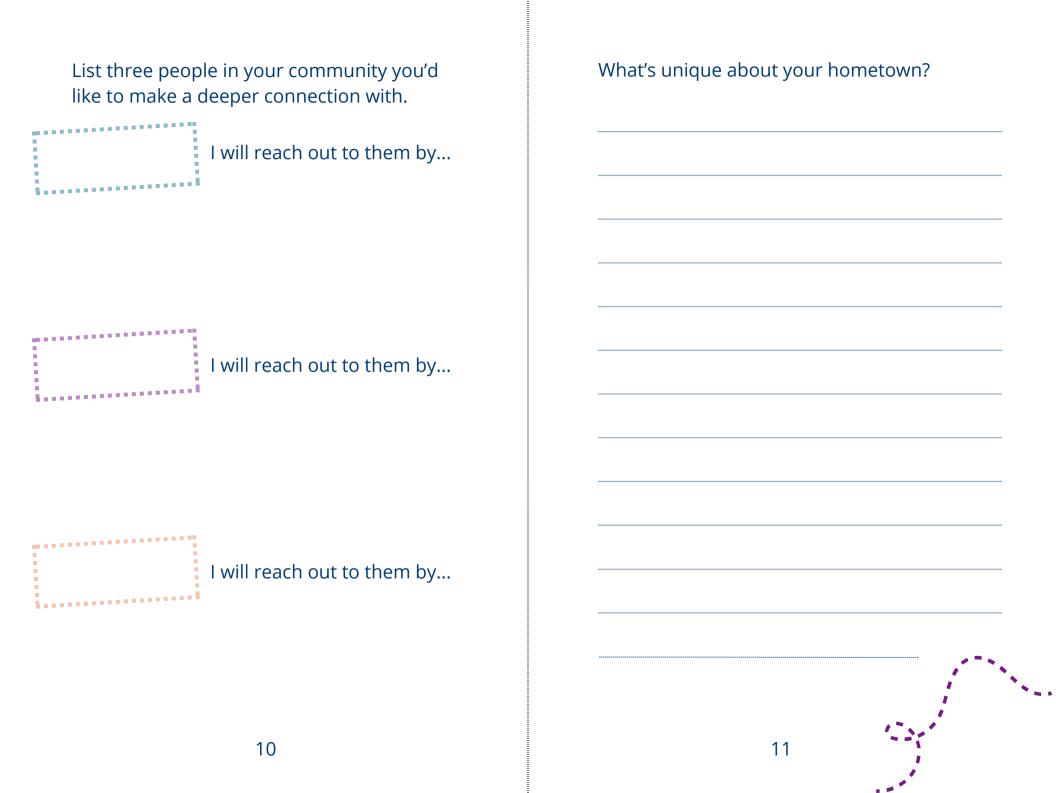
.....

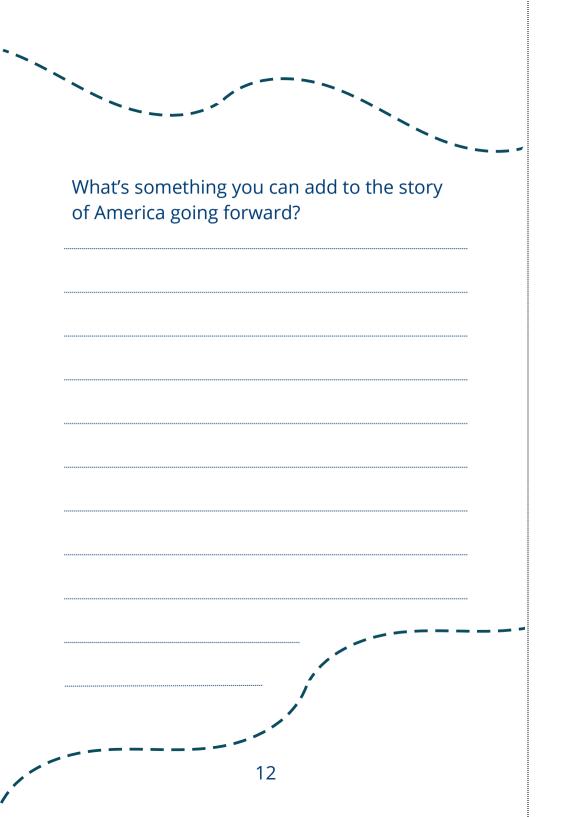
Sociologist Geoffrey Cohen defines belonging as "the feeling that we're part of a larger group that values, respects, and cares for us —and to which we feel we have something to contribute."

What is your role in cultivating belonging in your community?

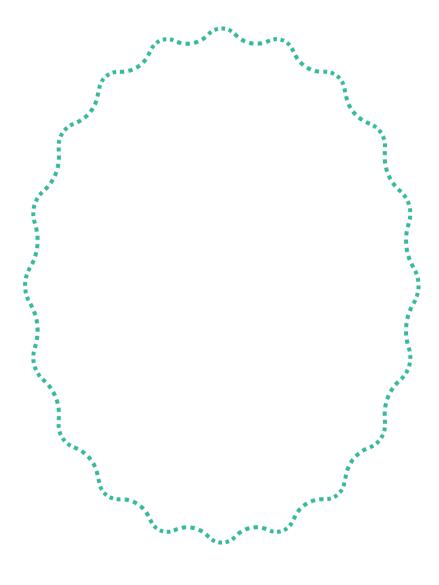
.....







What part of your identity has brought you joy?



What has stayed the same about America over the course of its history? What has changed?

Write about a time you felt like you belonged.

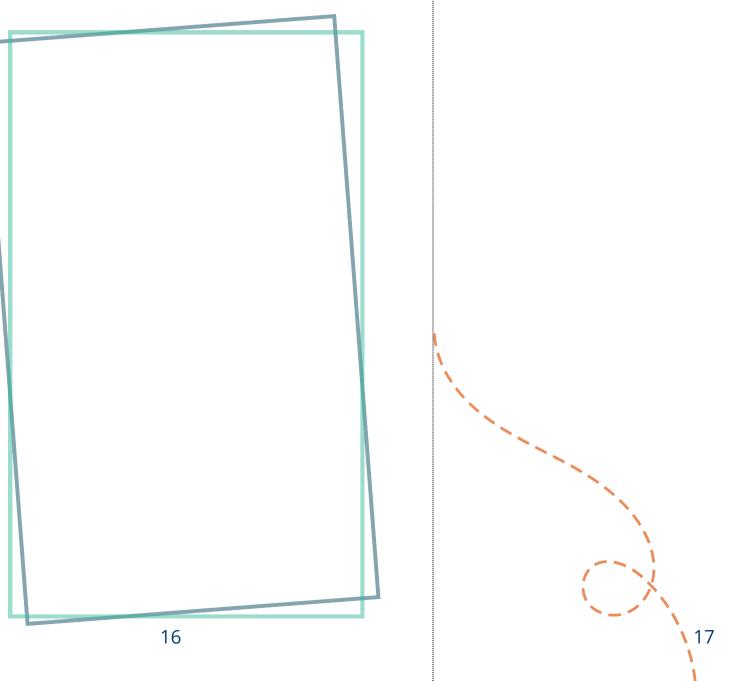
Would people from other countries say the same things?

		2			1										Ċ,							÷.	÷.	÷.		
																										1
																										1
1																										
1																										
									н.					 	 ÷		 	 	_							
										_	_	_													1.1	6.1

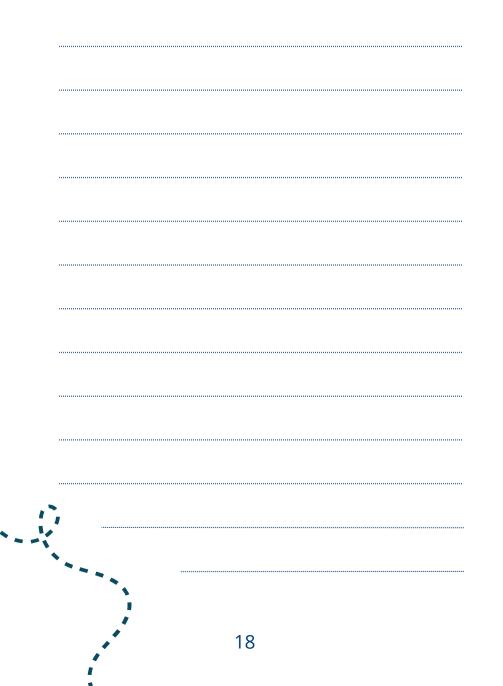


Would you ask a neighbor for help? Why or why not?

Why does trauma sometimes help people connect with each other?



When was the last time you felt like you were living out your values?



Draw a different symbol that represents America.

.....

Compare with your earlier drawing. What do these two symbols evoke when you place them together? Write a welcome letter to people who feel like they don't fully belong in the United States.

Dear,	
	•
	••
Voure	
Yours,	

Think about a community you belong to. How did you become a member?

In what ways does this community align with your values (or not)?

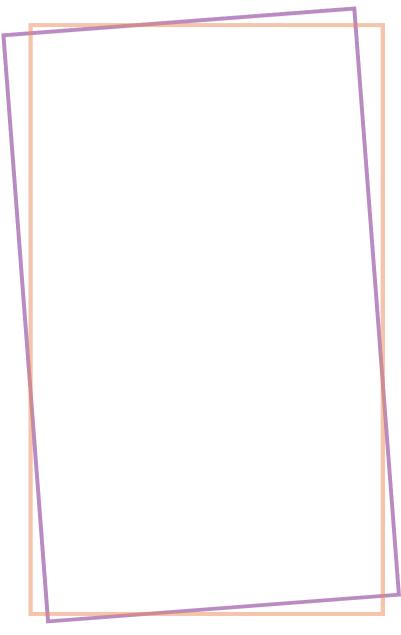
What questions do you have about American history?

What's a change you've made that you're proud of?

When have you felt safe to grieve openly? What people or spaces nurtured your ability to feel that grief?

N.				
	~ 2	24		
	· · · · .			

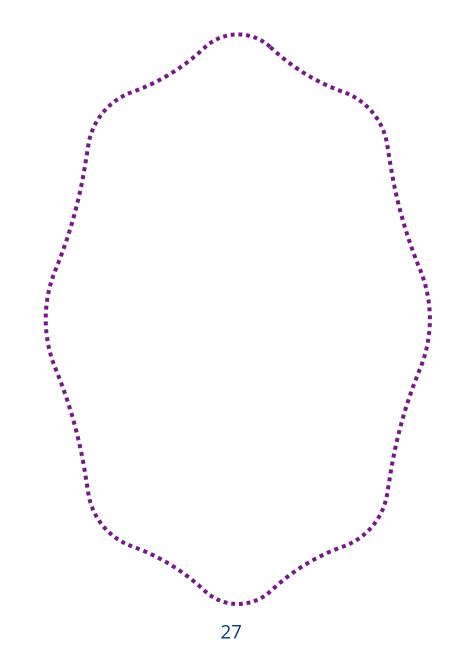
What's something about American history that surprised you when you learned it?

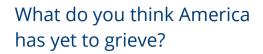


Choose one of the stories of America that you learned as a child. Write it here as if you were explaining it to someone from another nation.

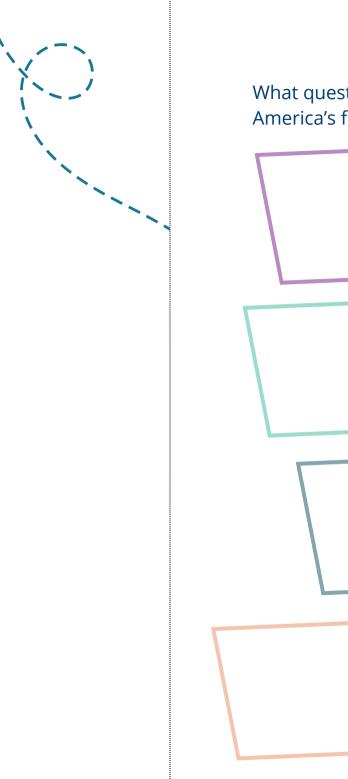
•	 	
	26	

What part of yourself do you want to know more about?





1 28



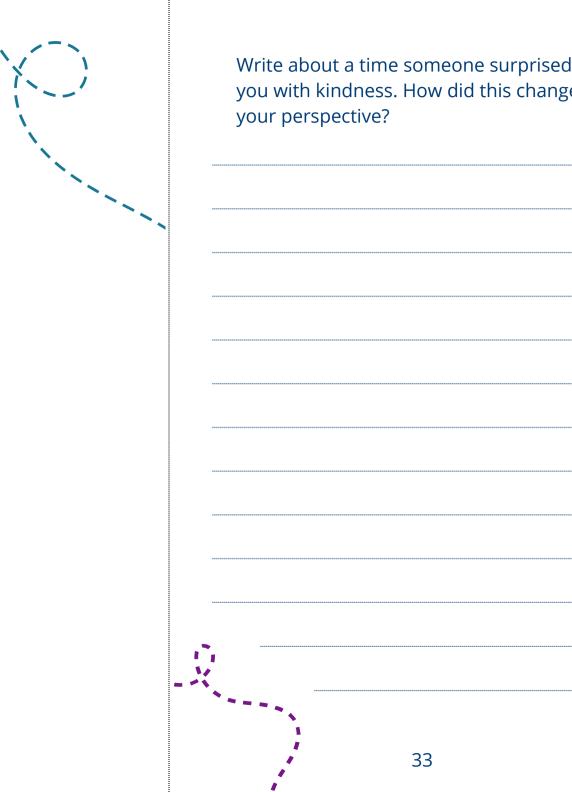
What questions do you have about America's future? When have you felt safe to feel joy openly? What people or spaces nurtured your ability to feel that joy?

Think about a group you are glad NOT to belong to. List the things you have in common with people in that group.

······	
30	31

Why does trauma sometimes push people apart?

32



Write about a time someone surprised you with kindness. How did this change We know that love is not always reciprocal - it's one of the oldest stories in the world. How do you love a place that doesn't love you back?

 		/
	~ ~	i i
		1
34	7	

 $\frac{\text{Empathy } \notin \text{Connection}}{\text{A Vision for America at }} 250$

To find out more about our initiative to commemorate the 250th anniversary of America's founding, please visit us at

www.lincolncottage.org





International Coalition of **SITES** of **CONSCIENCE**