

DISEÑEMOS UNA COMUNIDAD LIBRE DE ODIOS:

a través de la visualización de la equidad, erradicamos el racismo y la xenofobia

SOMOS [I Am Because] WE ARE

SOMOS/WE ARE is a collaborative initiative developed by Alianza Americas, its members, and allies, using art and other cultural expressions to tell the true stories of immigrants and our communities. SOMOS/WE ARE provides a powerful counter-narrative to the negative and misguided perception of immigrants that has come to dominate public discourse and policy making, thereby harming our communities, not just in the United States, but also in other countries around the world, including our own countries of origin. The SOMOS/WE ARE initiative focuses on story-telling as a way to share individual human stories while bringing to light the facts and all of the positive contributions of the immigrant community. As we share our SOMOS/WE ARE initiative with our communities and our allies, we reaffirm our determination to reclaim our humanity, dignity, and pride in our multicultural and multilingual roots and heritage.

In 2016 SOMOS/WE ARE took the form of a national summer art contest titled: *“Because I see myself in you: Transforming Xenophobia and Racism in Equity through the Arts.”* This initiative mobilized the communities in the Bronx NY, Morristown NJ, Chicago IL, and Homestead FL, involved children and youth ages 6 to 19. While each location implemented a unique program, in general participants completed art projects of self-expression through painting, drawings, and crafts. They also engaged in a variety of activities to learn about human rights, celebrate their own cultures, and participate in leadership-building exercises through discussions regarding the impact of racism and anti-immigrant rhetoric.

From learning new skills to making new friends and having a safe space in which to express themselves, there are many reasons why SOMOS is an invaluable program for children, youth, and adults. In their own words some participants shared:

“What I liked about this program was that I got to express my thoughts and feelings in my painting.”

“I liked that this program created an opportunity for me to be heard.”

“What I like about this program is the opportunities that it gives me. I get to facilitate the activities, I have a chance to plan with other facilitators, I make new friends, I also learn how to protect and stay away from violence or other things that are negative to my life.”



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In a time when immigrants and other communities are targeted, belittled, and demonized, it is imperative that we invest in nurturing the diverse identities and communities subjected to marginalization across the U.S. and the world. Beyond combating racist and xenophobic ideology, this is the time to acknowledge the many positive contributions of our communities and build pride around the many identities each of us hold. Alianza Americas invites you, your organization, and community to join the SOMOS initiative. Now is the time to celebrate our collective power.

In this handout you will find brief guidelines to implementing SOMOS in your own community. As you prepare to participate in SOMOS, we invite you to read tips (Do's and Don'ts) for a successful program, fill out the planning worksheet, learn our values, and review the SOMOS/ WE ARE toolkit from 2016.

These tips were gathered after interviewing participants from three locations that implemented SOMOS in 2016 and learning about their experiences. They aren't meant to be strict rules, but guidelines to help your program be a success.



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