



# Community Project

Inspired by the book, *When a Bully is President: Truth and Creativity for Oppressive Times* written & illustrated by Maya Gonzalez

## INTENT: REFLECTION

*We are history. We are now. Reclaim our history and presence in America by creating our own reflection.*

*2016 Statistics show that in order for POC/Indigenous communities to have equal representation in children's books as white Americans, we would need to create over 1400 more books per year.*

*It will take years and years to reach an annual increase like that, if ever! Our kids can't continue to live in this kind of invisibility. The impact is too great. We need to create real imagery of ourselves and our communities now. We need to take the power of our own image and feed it to ourselves. We make ourselves stronger with ourselves.*

The intent of the project is to create portraits for ourselves and when possible to share them with our community. Different portrait themes can be selected to respond directly to community needs.

**This is creative community ARTivism!**

We have the power to paint the real face of America.



# Prep: HOSTING AN EVENT

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*Adaptable for a school or public event.*

## OUTREACH:

**Use the book to reach out to parents, educators, schools, librarians and afterschool programs.** Also reach out to activist and community groups. This is a time to gather in ways that you might not be used to; see if you can make connections between communities and even different parts of the same community. This includes different ages.

**Create a flyer for the event that reflects your community.** It doesn't have to be perfect. Just real. Are there teen artists and activists at local schools who want to work with you on the event and create the flyer? Could it be a class project for middle schoolers to host the event? Look for different layers of leadership and teams. Bring kids who are similar to each other but are different ages and from different communities.

**Share the book with teens.** Do they have ideas about bringing people together and painting a real picture of America? Can they read the book at the event?

## EVENT OPTIONS: The Creating and the Sharing.

Having events that focus on the creating are fantastic. Consider working with young or old artists or both! Investigate if there are artists at the high school, community or local college who would want to share their style and skills. Or you can use the style in the book!

### » Portrait Theme Options:

- 1. Self Portrait** – invite everyone to create their own self portrait of respect.
- 2. Portraits of community respect** – invite everyone to create a portrait of respect of a family or community member. Another option is to create a portrait of respect of ancestors, activists, community leaders, change makers, artists, authors, etc... create a particular theme.
- 3. Portraits of support** – invite everyone to create a portrait of respect for someone who needs support or who we want to bring more attention and love to. Sadly this may be in honor of community who has been attacked or harmed.

## » Art Show

If and when possible, display the art publicly. This makes all the difference in the world. It's not about the attention. It's about the reflection. We need to see each other. We need to see ourselves in the world around us. This tells us on a deep nonverbal level that we belong.

Libraries, schools, coffee shops, colleges, parks, rec centers, community centers, grocery stores, markets, book stores. Everywhere. Our image belongs everywhere the same as us.

If you're going to display, consider something very simple like gluing all of the art on the same color paper to make it stronger and give the collection a look of unity.

## » More . . . .

Consider publishing a book about your community and the imagery and stories you're creating. Change the face of America.

\*Resources:

- *Reflection Press Publishing Resources (free):*  
[www.reflectionpress.com/radicalbooks](http://www.reflectionpress.com/radicalbooks)
- *School of the Free Mind Make Books Now Indie Publisher Training Program:*  
[www.schoolofthefreemind.com/makebooks](http://www.schoolofthefreemind.com/makebooks)

## MATERIALS:

**1. Pencils and paper are the most basic.** Don't be afraid to be simple.

Pencil drawings sometimes allow all kinds of fun detail you might not see otherwise.

**2. Crayons, colored paper, collage, markers, oil pastels, pens, watercolors.** Although technically not necessary, anything and everything additional is pure joy!

**3. Be familiar with your project and the materials.** This makes it easiest to explain and share, but other than that you can do ANYTHING imaginable. You can even create your own style and project. It's up to you.

**4. You can also begin with the book.** Follow the art projects. Simple drawing is a fantastic start. I specifically created this style to share how all 3



of us can begin drawing right now. Do one yourself or have a few folks do a sample so there are lots of different visions to inspire.

- 5. Make sure you have enough materials for everyone.** It's ok to share. And be sure there's room to make the art. It can even be on the floor. Whatever works for the space you're in. Each space will be different.
- 6. Donations, bring your own, in partnership with...be creative about getting art supplies!** You can even tell everyone to bring their own and the paper will be supplied. Don't be daunted. This is more than having the right art materials. This is about gathering people together to create reflection. Use anything and everything. The more creative you are the better. It could even be beans and pasta glued down.



## The Event:

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**Recommended Time:** 1-1/2 hours is a good amount of time. It allows gathering, reading, art making, snacks/music/fun, sharing.

**You'll need space to read the book and space to make the art.** It can definitely be the same space. Take into consideration what will make it the easiest. Are you also going to display the art here?

**Have all your materials.** Consider snacks and music, especially local musicians and artist/activists. See if this work already aligns with others and invite them in or have the event at the perfect coffee spot.

**The more people you involve the more people will show up.** Sometimes it can be tricky to gather people at first. Don't worry. Every step counts. I've been doing this for over 20 years!

### SAMPLE SCHEDULE:

1. Introductions, welcomes, intention
2. Read the book
  - a. Reading and pausing
    - i. *Read it through with questions and comments after, or*
    - ii. *Pause and discuss the book as you go*

- *might want to consider having a reader and a facilitator, one to read and one to pause and talk*
- *This depends on the age and engagement of your gathering*

**iii.** *The book is about 14 minutes to read straight through*

- *Note: I also have a video of me reading the full book and shows some of the final and in process art. Video can be found at [www.reflectionpress.com/truth](http://www.reflectionpress.com/truth)*

### **3.** Talk about the chosen project

*(refer to Event Options/Portrait Themes on pg. 2)*

**a.** Why it's important

**b.** How to create it

**i.** *Have a sample or three!*

**ii.** *And a short story step-by-step about how to create it*

**c.** If you plan, and everyone's agreed, to display the final art in your community (refer to Art Show on pg. 3):

**i.** *Simple display is awesome (but feel free to be more elaborate)*

**ii.** *Make it known, share our reflection! Let people know about the art show/exhibit.*

### **4.** Document the art

**a.** Ask artists if you can photograph the work and gather a portfolio of the images for public sharing

**5.** Consider hosting an event for your class, your community, your organization, your church, your temple, your ashram.

**You are beautiful. I'm so glad you're here.  
We are stronger together.**

*Love maya*  
♥