



THE NYSL  
PERSONAL  
HISTORY  
INITIATIVE  
TOOLKIT

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO MAKE HISTORY



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# IN THE BEGINNING



## The Why of it All

Way back in 2020, when, as Dickens wrote, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times --- but mostly the worst of times, thanks to COVID-19. The lockdown gave us plenty of time to ponder. As we reflected on the pandemic, we thought about the 1918 influenza epidemic a century earlier and how historians, scientists, and journalists were trawling through archives to understand how society dealt with past crises.

We thought about the power of story and its role in shaping history. The experiences of all New Yorkers, from Long Island to Plattsburgh and from Albany to Buffalo, make up the foundation of our state's history.

The NYS Library's Manuscripts and Special Collections unit could provide the fertile soil to nurture the seeds of our shared collective history – all we had to do was create a space to gather them.

The Personal History Initiative collects the stories of everyday New Yorkers. People are welcome to submit a written, visual, or recorded story of what it means to be a New Yorker.

We invite you to share your story and help us make history.



# HOW TO TELL A GREAT STORY

The New York State Library's Personal History Initiative is all about stories and how our individual stories connect to create a larger narrative about what it means to be a New Yorker. Stories are a way to express ourselves and relate to others. By compiling and sharing stories from around the state, we create a rich treasure trove to deepen our understanding of our place in the world.

But how do we tell our story in a way that gets people excited, helps them learn something new about the world or our perspective, or have it echo their lives? Telling a story allows people to create visuals in their minds as they envision your tale. Traditional storytelling follows this arc:

- An introduction to the characters and the obstacles facing them,
- How the characters overcame the challenges,
- A resolution explaining how the main character overcame the obstacle.

Not all stories have to follow that format. You can choose to tell your story in a way that makes sense for you. You could share the history of your organization, a recent triumph, or anecdotes about what you do each day. Feel free to include photos, drawings, artwork, video, or anything else you'd like to include that will help bring your story to life.

Here are some ideas to get started:

- Think about a story you love. What makes it great? What caught your attention and made it memorable?
- Now think about the story you want to share. Think about who your audience is. What do you want people to take away from the story?
- Grab your reader's attention. What would the headline be if you read your story in the newspaper? Great stories grab us from the get-go, wanting us to know more.

# STORYTELLING PROMPTS



- Set the mood. Think about where you were, who you were with, the weather, and why as you begin to write. You don't need to include all of that information, but remembering the details will help you set the scene for the story and establish a personal connection.
- Keep it simple. Your story doesn't have to be an epic struggle or an odyssey (although it may be!). Use clear language that everyone can understand.
- Structure the journey. Does your story have a beginning, middle, and end? A story doesn't have to be chronological – you may want to start in the middle of a story to grab someone's attention and then revisit the beginning. Be sure to create an ending that brings all the pieces together.
- Edit. Read your story as if you didn't know what was coming next. Is there enough detail to bring it to life? Could a stranger understand it?
- Share your story. A story comes to life when others experience it. Share it with your local librarian, who will post it to the New York State Library's Personal History Initiative.

Not sure where to start? Try these prompts:

- Sit down with a loved one and look at a photo album together. Tell a story about one of the pictures.
- Tell us about your name. How did you get it? What does it mean? Do you have a nickname? Who gave it to you?
- What was your favorite hideaway as a child? What made it a place of solace?
- What story has been passed down in your family for generations? Do you think it's true? Does each generation customize it? What do you add to the story?
- Where did you meet your spouse/significant other/special person? Who were you with? When did you know they were the one?
- What was the first concert you attended? Where was it? Who went with you? When was it? What song do you remember as if it were yesterday?
- What's your favorite way to spend a cold evening?
- What's the worst meal you've cooked? Who did you share it with?

# APPROACHING COMMUNITY PARTNERS

## WHAT

The Personal History Initiative is designed to collect the stories of everyday New Yorkers. What challenges do you face? What obstacles have you overcome? How do current events factor into your daily life? What do you love to do? What makes you a New Yorker?

The experiences of all New Yorkers, from Long Island to Plattsburgh and from Albany to Buffalo, make up the foundation of our state's history. To record and preserve the historical events unfolding around us all the time, the NYS Library's Manuscripts and Special Collections (MSC) unit encourages all New Yorkers to document their community's history and experiences.

## WHO

### Getting Started

Start with someone you know. This is a great way to practice asking for participation from someone who can offer feedback while deepening your relationships and building community. By sharing a story with a friend, colleague, or acquaintance, we become confident storytellers and deepen relationships.

Think strategically about who has a great story to tell. Incorporate that into your ask: We'd love for you to be a part of this project because we want to share your story with the NYSL Personal History Initiative.

Consider what role the partner/stakeholder holds in the community. Whom do they represent?

### Next Steps

Brainstorm with the initial partner/stakeholder about who else could share a great story. If you don't know the person/organization they've mentioned, ask if they could make an introduction. Before you meet, please do some research about the organization to know what they're working on, their mission, and whom they serve.

- Identify whom to approach
- Introduce yourself
- Ask about what they do
- Ask about their organization's mission & goals
- Tell them about the NYSL PHI
- Tie it to their mission & goals

## PRO TIPS

Remember to keep community demographics in mind. Review the Census data for your community, keeping in mind that Black & Hispanic / LatinX people were drastically undercounted in the 2020 Census. Are you sharing stories that represent everyone in your community?

### HOW

#### The Meet-Up

You can meet potential contributors in-person or virtually. Start with an email or a phone call, and ask if they have 10-15 minutes to talk about the project.

If you're comfortable meeting in person, offer to have coffee/tea/warm beverage with someone. If they are a business owner, ask to tour their business. Explain what the project's about (see above), and why you're asking them to contribute – what work of theirs would you like to see highlighted? Why have you chosen them to get involved?

### WHEN

Early & often.

Remember, this isn't a one-and-done experience. People can participate as much as they like.

There are two ways to participate:

#### ONE

Talk to organizations, people active in the community, and institutions about sharing stories about the work they do and how it impacts the community, how they contribute to life in New York, and why it matters.

#### TWO

Take part in the Our NY History monthly challenges. Grab a friend or family member and document how you're taking part in the challenge, and what you did. Share a photo and a story online at:

<https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>

# POTENTIAL SCRIPTS



## Initial Phone Call

Hi! This is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm getting in touch to see if you have 15 minutes to meet to talk about a new initiative we're taking part in, the New York State Library's Personal History Initiative. Its goal is to gather, amplify, and celebrate the stories of everyday New Yorkers.

We're collecting stories to find out what obstacles people have overcome, how current events affect people's lives, what people love, and what makes someone a New Yorker.

We'd love to share the work you're doing/your story with the New York State Library's Public History Initiative. Do you have time to grab coffee (or have a quick Zoom meet-up) so we can discuss this?

## In-Person Meeting

Thanks so much for making time to meet with me today. We're taking part in the New York State Library's Personal History Initiative.

The project is collecting stories of people and organizations that are doing great work in our community.

We share those stories on a virtual platform hosted by the New York State Library. It's an opportunity to gather, amplify and celebrate the stories of everyday New Yorkers. We'd love to have you be a part of it.

What do you think?

Here are the next steps: Please send us a brief write-up about your organization along with any pictures you to illustrate the story. We'll upload it to the site, where it will be organized with other stories about our community. Feel free to email me your material.

Do you have any questions? How can I help you make this happen?

## E-Mail

Subject Line: Share Your Story w the New York State Library

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I'm reaching out to let you know about the New York State Library's Personal History Initiative, a project focused on collecting personal stories exploring what it means to be a New Yorker.



We're asking people to share a story about a place they love, experiences they've had, or something that makes them a New Yorker – from the Brooklyn Bridge to Niagara Falls, we, much like Walt Whitman, contain multitudes.

We would love to have you participate in this project. Here's what's involved:

- Send us your story. It can be as short as a haiku, or several pages long – you decide.
- Show us your story – send photos, drawings, audio, or videos.

That's it. The crackerjack crew at the New York State Library will take care of the rest. Your story will be uploaded and shared on <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/about>.

Thanks so much for considering being a part of the next chapter of our history! If you have any questions, please ask!



# PRESS RELEASE TEMPLATE

## Headline: Making History

### Subhead: The New York State Library's Personal History Initiative

(ALBANY, NY) – From the bustling streets of New York City and the stoic welcome of the Statue of Liberty to the mighty torrent of Niagara Falls and the majestic Adirondacks, New York is a state with millions of stories – and the New York State Library's Manuscripts and Special Collections (MSC) unit want yours. MSC launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture, preserve, and celebrate the stories of the Empire State, as told by everyday people. Residents of all ages are invited to contribute stories to its website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/>.

"During the early days of the pandemic, we reflected on how we could bring our friends and neighbors together," said Peter Nastasi, Associate Librarian for MSC. "As COVID ravaged our state, we wanted to preserve the stories of everyday people."

The experiences of all New Yorkers, from Long Island to Plattsburgh and from Albany to Buffalo, make up the foundation of our state's history, and each has a unique tale to tell. There are several ways to participate: Send your story to your local librarians or respond to monthly challenges on the Personal History Initiative site: <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>.

"We're delighted to have this opportunity to share the stories of \_\_\_\_\_ (your community)," said **(Library Director/Board President)**. **"Include something specific about your town."**

"This gives us a chance to gather, curate, and celebrate the stories of everyday New Yorkers," said Nastasi. "We can preserve and share these stories with future generations."

Contributed stories may be made available to the public for scholarly, educational, and research purposes.

The NYS Research Library was established in 1818 to collect, preserve, and make available materials that support NY State government work. Its collections include more than 20 million items and are utilized by researchers on-site, online, and via interlibrary loan.

- The NYS Library's hours are Monday through Friday, 9:30 am–5 pm, closed Saturdays, Sundays, and all state-observed holidays.
- Contact the Manuscripts and Special Collections Reference Desk.

The NYS Library's New York State Personal History Initiative is supported in part by temporary federal Library Services Technology Act (LSTA) funds and federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds allocated to the New York State Library by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

For more information, contact PJ Nastasi at [peter.nastasi@nysed.gov](mailto:peter.nastasi@nysed.gov). To participate in **Library Name's** Personal History Initiative project, contact **Person** at **Library – phone number & email**.

# Talking Points Template



The New York State Library's Personal History Initiative is an exciting opportunity for individuals and organizations to share their stories, perspectives, and experiences. Nervous about approaching potential contributors? Use these talking points.

## Stakeholders

The New York State Library launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture the stories of everyday New Yorkers. It has created a website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/>, to share and preserve the many stories that make up the Empire State.

This is an opportunity to promote and amplify your story or your organization's story and share the great work you're doing for the historical record.

There are two ways to participate:

- Work with your local library to share a story – it can be illustrated with photos or drawings and include recordings. You get to determine the format and what you share.
- Take part in the themed monthly challenges found on the NYSL PHI website (<https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>)

All stories will be made available to the public for information, education, entertainment, and research purposes. Your contribution will take its place alongside other tales to create a living portrait of our state.

All submissions will be archived & preserved for future generations. Taking part in this project allows you to communicate with people you may never meet.

You decide what you share and how to present it.

Your story may be curated into a collection based on region or subject matter.

Are there other organizations or stakeholders we should talk to?

## Public

The New York State Library launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture the stories of everyday New Yorkers. It has created a website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/>, to share and preserve the many stories that make up the Empire State.

Your story matters. This is a chance to share your experience and interests. We want to know what makes you a New Yorker.

# Talking Points

## Template Continued



There are two ways to participate:

- Work with your local library to share a story – it can be illustrated with photos or drawings and include recordings. You get to determine the format and what you share.
- Take part in the themed monthly challenges found on the NYSL PHI website:  
<https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>

If you submit a story or share an experience, it will be made available to the public for information, education, entertainment, and research purposes. It will take its place alongside other tales to create a living portrait of our state.

All submissions will be archived & preserved for future generations. Taking part in this project allows you to communicate with people you may never meet.

You decide what to share and how to present it.

Your story may be curated into a collection based on region or subject matter

Do you know anyone else who might be interested in taking part? Can you help us spread the word?

### Media

The New York State Library launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture the stories of everyday New Yorkers. It has created a website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/>, to share and preserve the many stories that make up the Empire State.

This is an opportunity to capture and curate New Yorkers' wide range of stories and experiences.

Anyone can participate – including journalists and news organizations! We want your stories as well!

There are two ways to participate:

- Work with your local library to share a story – it can be illustrated with photos or drawings and include recordings. You get to determine the format and what you share.
- Take part in the themed monthly challenges found on the NYSL PHI website  
(<https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>)

Once a story is submitted it will be made available to the public for information, education, entertainment, and research purposes. It will take its place alongside other tales to create a living portrait of our state.

All submissions will be archived & preserved for future generations. Taking part in this project allows individuals to leave a permanent record.

Participants decide what they share and how to present it.

The stories may be curated into a collection based on region or subject matter.



# PROGRAM TEMPLATES

Looking for a great public program to inspire people to participate in the Personal History Initiative? Try these suggestions.

## HOMESCHOOL WRITING PROGRAM

Does your library offer programs for homeschoolers? If so, consider hosting a program on writing a submission for the New York State Library's Personal History Initiative.

If not, here's an opportunity to get started! Use this template to encourage homeschoolers to contribute. It's a great way to develop writing skills, have a discussion about how history is recorded, and share a story with the community.

### Time

60 minutes

### Materials

Encourage everyone to bring their favorite writing implements. Be sure to have on hand:

- Crayons
- Colored Markers
- Pen
- Pencil
- Paper
- Computer
- Digital Recorder
- Timer

### Event

Welcome everyone to the program.

#### Introductions: (10 min)

- Ask everyone to introduce themselves: Share your name & your favorite place to go/ thing to do for fun in New York

#### Provide a brief explanation of the NYSL Personal History Initiative: (5 min)

- The New York State Library launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture the stories of everyday New Yorkers. It has created a website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/>, to share and preserve the many stories that make up the Empire State. Today we'll be exploring and writing our stories to add to the project.

# HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM CONTINUED

A couple of things to know about the project:

- If you submit a story or share an experience, it will be made available to the public for information, education, entertainment, and research purposes. It will take its place alongside other tales to create a living portrait of our state.
- All submissions will be archived & preserved for future generations. Taking part in this project means you have a chance to communicate with people you may never meet. What would you like them to know about your life? What makes you a New Yorker?
- Feel free to add anything you like about your town/county/region. Share a personal story about why the project interests you, and what it means to create and curate stories from your area.

## Discussion (10 minutes)

Who writes history? How is it shaped? What impact does it have on future generations?

This is a chance for you to make history. By sharing your story, you'll give people an insight into how we lived, what mattered to us, and what we were thinking about in 2022.

This will help researchers, historians, and regular people have a better understanding of what it was like to live in our time.

## Storytelling (5 minutes)

How do we share information?

- Oral history: When people pass down information by telling stories about their lives. Originally, these stories would have been shared in person. Now, we can record stories to share with people we may never meet. Oral histories allow us to hear people's voices, and see the past through their eyes.
- Written history: A way to generate and preserve original information (primary source material) to provide a greater understanding of how history is shaped. When we write history, we are creating a record of something that happened.
- Visual history: A way to communicate history through pictures, capturing images that represent our experience.



# HOMESCHOOL PROGRAM CONTINUED

## **Tell Your Story (20 minutes)**

Choose how you would like to tell your story. It can be an oral history, a written history, or a visual history.

Decide on the story you want to tell. What do you want future generations to know about what it is like to live in New York today? You can share a story about your favorite place to visit, whom you like to spend time with, and how you celebrate holidays – whatever you'd like to share!

## **Reflection and Sharing: (5 minutes)**

Who would like to share their story? Why is this important to you? What would you like people to know about your life?

## **Wrap-Up & Goodbyes: (5 minutes)**

Thank everyone for participating.

Ask if anyone has a submission that you could send to the Personal History Initiative now. If not, ask them to send them along later.

Invite them to continue to take part by replying to the monthly challenges, found here:

<https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>

# WRITING GROUP PROGRAM

If your library has a writing group, or if you'd like to offer a one-off writing session, use this template to encourage your community to contribute their stories to the New York State Library's Personal History Initiative.

Tie it into personal writing history, whether a reflection on the madeleine like Proust, a dysfunctional family like Mary Karr, or waxing poetic like Walt Whitman.

## Time

90 minutes

## Materials

Encourage everyone to bring their favorite writing implements. Be sure to have on hand:

- Pen
- Pencil
- Paper
- Computer
- Timer

## Event

Welcome everyone to the program.

### Introductions: (10 min)

- Ask everyone to introduce themselves:  
Share your name & your favorite hangout in New York.

### Provide a brief explanation of the NYSL Personal History Initiative: (5 min)

- The New York State Library launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture the stories of everyday New Yorkers. It has created a website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/>, to share and preserve the many stories that make up the Empire State. Today we'll be exploring and writing our stories to add to the project.

A couple of things you should know about the project:

- If you submit a story or share an experience, it will be made available to the public for information, education, entertainment, and research purposes. It will take its place alongside other tales to create a living portrait of our state.
- All submissions will be archived & preserved for future generations. Taking part in this project means you have a chance to communicate with people you may never meet. What would you like them to know about your life? What makes you a New Yorker?

# WRITING GROUP PROGRAM CONTINUED

- Feel free to add anything you like about your town/county/region. Share a personal story about why the project interests you, and what it means to create and curate stories from your area.
- Share an example of a submission on the site. Choose your favorite from <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/>.

## Freewriting: (10 minutes)

- Allow yourself to write whatever comes to mind when you think about what it means to be a New Yorker. Follow wherever your mind takes you – there are no wrong turns and no mistakes. This is a chance for your mind to wander.
- Your writing doesn't have to be perfect. Don't worry about grammar or spelling – just keep writing, allowing your pen or pencil to move across the paper.

## Reflection & Sharing: (10 mins)

- Ask the group if anyone wants to share what they learned during the writing process. Was anyone surprised at what they uncovered? Who unearthed something they'd like to spend more time exploring?
- Allow participants to ask each other questions.

## Writing Session: (30 minutes)

Writing prompts: Participants can choose to elaborate on something that was sparked during the freewriting session, or they could use one of the following prompts:

- What smells remind you of your childhood? Why?
- If you could describe New York in one smell, what would it be?
- How did you meet your spouse? Where were you? What were you doing? Did you know you would end up together?
- Describe a memorable meal. What was it? Where did it take place? What was the occasion? Who was there?
- What family story has been passed down from generation to generation? Do you think it's true?
- Tell us about your name. Where did it come from? What does it mean?
- Think about when you learned to drive. Who taught you? Where did you go to practice? How was the experience? Where are your favorite drives in New York?



## WRITING GROUP PROGRAM CONTINUED

### Reflection and Sharing: (20 minutes)

Ask for volunteers to share their story or their favorite couple of sentences from their story. Why is it important to them? What does it tell us about where we live? Why will it matter to future generations?

### Wrap-Up & Goodbyes: (5 minutes)

- Thank everyone for participating
- Ask if anyone has a submission that you could send to the Personal History Initiative now. If not, ask them to send them along later.
- Invite them to continue to take part by replying to the monthly challenges, found here: <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>



## BOOK CLUB PROGRAM

Book clubs are a sacred space where we come together to talk about stories, ideas, characters, and how the combination resonates with our lives. We've designed the "New Yorkers Who Changed the World" Book Club to inspire people to learn more about those who came before us and those who continue to be pioneers. It's a chance to reflect on our lives and the impact we hope to make.

### Time

60 minutes

### Materials

- Copies of title(s) for all participants
- Questions to spark discussion
- Paper
- Pen
- Computer to demonstrate NYSL PHI Initiative Website

### Recommended Titles

The book club could be organized in two ways:

Everyone reads the same title, or people choose from a list of titles, and then come together to discuss. The discussion questions are designed to work with either approach.

We believe the following titles would engage a wide range of audiences:

- Eleanor Roosevelt Volume 1: 1884-1933 by Blanche Weisen Cook
- Zami, a New Spelling of My Name by Audre Lorde
- Alexander Hamilton by Ron Chernow
- James Baldwin, A Biography by David Leeming
- My Beloved World by Sonia Sotomayor

### EVENT

#### Introductions (5 minutes)

Introduce yourselves.

#### NYSL Personal History Initiative Overview: (5 min)

The New York State Library launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture the stories of everyday New Yorkers. It has created a website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com>, to share and preserve the many stories that make up the Empire State. Today we'll be discussing stories about New Yorkers who changed the world and the impact their lives had on future generations.



## BOOK CLUB PROGRAM CONTINUED

### Discussion (40 min)

Potential discussion questions:

- Share a favorite quote from the book. What about it spoke to you?
- What did you know about this person before you began this book?
- What makes a memoir successful? How does the author build trust with their audience?
- What information guided the biographer? Would you come to the same conclusions about this person's life?
- What did you learn from this person's life? Did anything surprise you?
- If you could talk to the author, what would you ask?
- What was the author trying to communicate? Were they successful?
- Why do you think the author thought it was important to share this story?
- What do we learn about ourselves when we read stories about others?
- Had you heard about this book before you read it? Would you recommend it to others?



### Invitation to contribute to NYSL PHI (5 min)

There are two ways to participate:

- Submit your story to us! We're happy to post it to the NYSL Personal History Initiative's website and can even add it to a curated collection of stories from our community. When you send it, feel free to include illustrations – either photos or drawings are great! You can also include a recording if you prefer. You get to determine the format and what you share.
- Take part in the themed monthly challenges found on the NYSL PHI website (<https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/our-blog>). You can share the monthly challenges with family, friends & neighbors and complete them together!

### Wrap Up & Goodbyes (5 min)

Ask participants to let you know when they contribute their story so you can share it on social media.



## GENEALOGY PROGRAM

Many factors shape our lives, including our experiences, family, opportunities, and places we inhabit. Genealogy appeals to people because it provides a way to trace our roots and embark on a “quest for self-knowledge,” as psychologist Roy Baumeister said. When we journey into the past, we may discover surprises – long-lost relatives with similar interests, ne’er do wells, or heroes may enter the picture. As we uncover our familial history, it informs our own and gives us a way to have a more complex understanding of ourselves. Hosting a genealogy program and encouraging participants to contribute to the historical record allows for a richer, more diverse accounting of who we are and how we got here.

### TIME

90 minutes

### MATERIALS

- Pen
- Paper
- Digital Recorders
- High-Quality microphone compatible with computer
- Local history material (if available)
- Laptops/computer to demonstrate how to use genealogical platforms and the NYSL PHI site



### EVENT

#### Introductions (5 minutes)

Ask everyone to introduce themselves and why this program is of interest.

#### NYSL Personal History Initiative Overview: (5 min)

The New York State Library launched its Personal History Initiative in 2020 to capture the stories of everyday New Yorkers. It has created a website, <https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com>, to share and preserve the many stories that make up the Empire State. Today we’ll examine the tool available through our library to learn more about our past and how it’s shaped our lives.

#### Overview of Resources (10-15 min)

Share the many resources available to patrons interested in genealogical research through your library. Don’t forget to mention NOVELNY, including GALE OneFile News & New York State Newspapers.

Consider:

- Do you have a subscription to Ancestry.com or Heritage Quest?
- Do you have a local history collection? Do you know where people can access old census and other data?
- Is there a local historian you could invite to talk about the area’s history and the families who have shaped the community?
- Does the library have an archive?
- Is there a local historical society?

# GENEALOGY PROGRAM CONTINUED

## Story Crafting (40 minutes)

This exercise allows participants to reflect on their lives and what to share with future generations.

Begin by identifying an audience.

- Whom do you want to share this story with? Is it for family members? Friends? People you don't know?
- Will your story be written or recorded? Would you prefer to document it visually? What's the best way to communicate about your life?
- What do you want to learn about your family?
- When did your family arrive in New York?
- Why did they choose New York?
- How does your experience with your family shape your view of the world?
- What makes New York home?
- How has your neighborhood changed since you were young?

Some people may prefer to contribute an oral history. Set up an oral history station with a digital recording device (available through most laptops) or an external microphone plugged into a computer.

## Reflection & Discussion (20 minutes)

- What does it mean to contribute to the historical record?
- How did you choose the story you're sharing?
- What is important for future generations to know about our lives?

## Invitation to contribute to NYSL PHI (5 min)

There are two ways to participate:

- Submit your story to us (your beloved local library)! We're happy to post it to the NYSL Personal History Initiative's website and can even add it to a curated collection of stories from our community. When you send it, feel free to include illustrations – photos or drawings are great! You can also include a recording if you prefer. You get to determine the format and what you share.
- Take part in the themed monthly challenges found on the NYSL PHI website (<https://www.nyspersonalhistory.com/ourblog>)

Share the monthly challenges with family, friends & neighbors and complete them together!

## Wrap Up & Goodbyes (5 min)

# CHECKLIST

## Start Here

- Write a story
- Submit to NYSL PHI project
- Share a link to your story on social media (see social media templates)
- Be proud of making history

## Next

- Post to social media about taking part in the project & why it matters to you
- Recruit friends, family & community members to contribute to the NYSL PHI project
- Talk about WHY the project matters
- Explain how people can participate:
  - Write/record/draw/photograph a story
  - Respond to a challenge/prompt
  - Collect stories
  - Submit stories to NYSL PHI
  - Send participants a link to the story on the website
- Be proud of making history

## For the Bold & the Brave

- Send a press release to a local news organization about your participation in the process (see sample press release)
- Approach Community Partners (see Approaching Community Partners worksheet in the toolkit)
- Collect stories from community partners
- Submit stories to NYSL PHI
- Post to social media about participating in the project & why it matters – copy or shout out your community partner in the post!
- Send link to community partner of submission on the website
- Be proud of making history



# CONTACT INFORMATION

Want to know more? Can't wait to get involved?

The New York State Library Personal History Initiative is led by PJ Nastasi. To get in touch, email [peter.nastasi@nysed.gov](mailto:peter.nastasi@nysed.gov).

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