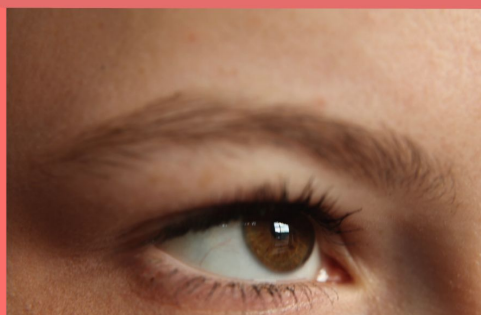


# An Oral History Book for Kids



A  
Girl Scout  
Gold Award  
Project

# WOMEN BECOMING IN A NEW WORLD

By Micaela Waterston

# *Women Becoming in a New World*

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**I wrote this book to give young girls— especially those who are immigrants or first-generation children of immigrants— amazing role models to inspire them! These stories show that all girls can grow up to be leaders and cultivate change locally, nationally, and globally.**

**This book is dedicated to all the girls who read it and get inspired to also do great things. I wouldn't have been able to write this book without the support of the Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson and to my family.**

# Acknowledgements

**I extend many thanks to Martha López-Hanratty, Watfa Shama, and Christine Roth for sharing their stories with me. You are each an inspiration!**

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**My heartfelt appreciation goes to the Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson, Ms. Patrice Fitzpatrick, my troop leaders Lisa Fear, Cindy Byrne, and Kathy Fitzgerald, and to all my Girl Scout peers for their love and support.**

**Thank you Salem Baker for taking and providing me with the photography used in my book cover.**

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# Introduction

*Women Becoming in a New World* features a slice of Westchester County's diversity in the accounts of three fascinating women from diverse backgrounds.

Each woman has a migration story, a tale of resilience, and a narrative of overcoming obstacles that enabled them to make positive contributions to their communities.

First, a bit of background about diversity in Westchester County—what it means, what it looks like, and how it contributes to the building of a multicultural society.

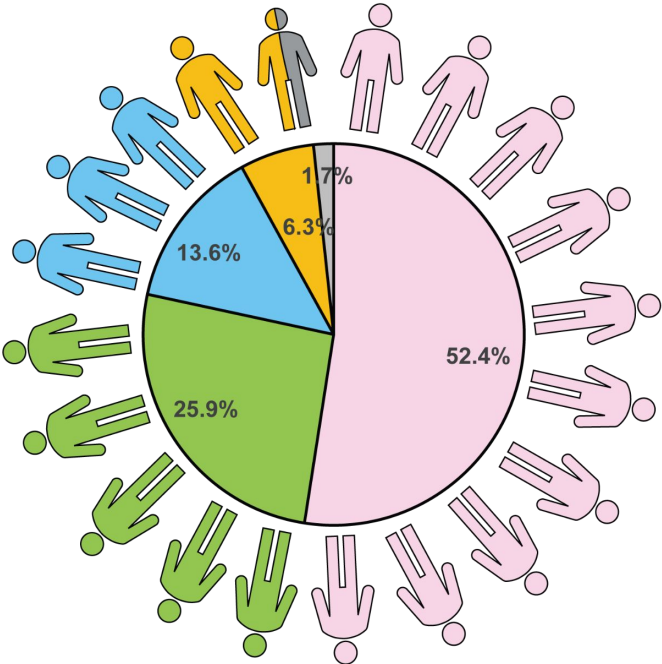
**Do you know that New York is the sixth most ethnically and racially diverse state in the United States?<sup>1</sup>**

**In fact, in Westchester County where Girl Scouts Heart of the Hudson is based, almost half of the population is Latinx, Black, Asian, or from some other non-white, non-Hispanic group.<sup>2</sup>**

**Diversity is a hallmark of New Rochelle where my Girl Scout troop 2148 is located. It is the 10th most diverse small city in the United States!<sup>3</sup>**

**The amazing diversity that marks several communities in Westchester County is a direct result of immigration. There are many immigrant families that have made the County their home.**

# What Does Westchester's Diversity Look Like?



□ White, non-Latinx    ■ Latinx    ■ Black    ■ Asian    ■ Multiracial

Source: [www.USAFacts.org](http://www.USAFacts.org)

(USAFacts and WalletHub)



**The lower part of New York State, which includes the five boroughs of New York City and Westchester County, has a long history of welcoming people from many countries, races, ethnicities, and religious backgrounds. Most come to the United States as immigrants from other countries in search of a better life and more opportunities for their families. Others come with work or student visas.**

**The diversity of our cities, towns, and neighborhoods in Westchester is seen in the array of faces, skin tones, languages, foods, music, and cultural activities around us.**

**This diversity is what makes Westchester County such a vibrant and exciting community in which to live!**

**Diversity is not only a hallmark of New York or other major urban areas across the United States. In fact, the United States as a whole is a country made up of immigrants!**

**If you think about it, the early immigrants to what later became the United States were travelers from various parts of the world, including England and Spain. They came upon the indigenous people who themselves traveled to this land from the Bering Strait.**

**Every one of us has an immigration story at some point in our family history.**

**People who come to live in the United States from other countries often stay connected to their culture through their language, foods, music, art, holidays, and traditions. At the same time, they navigate life in their new home here in the United States, learning, for example, the dominant language and certain cultural practices.**

**Multiculturalism is what makes the United States so special. It is an important part of who we are as a country and plays a big role in what we think of as “American” culture.**

**This is because the many different communities and cultures that make up the United States are constantly mixing together. As our languages, foods, music, art, holidays, and traditions merge with and influence one another, they are constantly reshaping the larger culture.**

**But making a new life in the United States is not easy for most newcomers. Often, people are pushed to leave their countries and become immigrants in the United States because of poverty, violence, and war, conditions that powerful countries such as the U.S. have had a hand in causing.**

**At the same time, people are pulled to wealthier and more powerful countries like the United States, believing they will find opportunities.**

**The path to come to the United States can be very difficult, primarily because of legal, economic, and political barriers. Other factors, such as transportation and language barriers, can also be challenging.**

**Immigrant families come in all different shapes and sizes.**

**Some immigrants have no choice but to leave their children behind until they can find a way to bring the family together.**

**Sometimes, immigrants come to the United States with their children. Can you imagine what it would be like to come to a new country as a child? To leave the place where you were born, say goodbye to your friends, and move to a place where you don't know the language or the culture?**

**Still others start families in their new country. Their children are the first generation of their families to be born in the United States. This comes with its own set of experiences and challenges.**

**Of course, not all people who come to the United States from other places face the same barriers. People who come here from other countries with work or student visas might already come with more education and financial resources, which can help make the process of moving into a new country a little easier.**

**But even for those whose migration is easier, leaving your home and having to get used to cultural differences can be a challenging and sometimes lonely process.**

**Coming from a different country and culture can be scary and hard, but it doesn't have to stop one from being able to grow up to become super successful in life!**

**Each of the three women from Westchester County who you will meet in this book have unique family migration stories. They have had to overcome their own sets of challenges and grew up to do amazing things with their lives and careers. They are having a positive impact on other people's lives in Westchester, in the greater New York area, and across the world!**

**Let's meet them!**



# Meet Martha López-Hanratty

**Martha, a fifteen-year old immigrant from Mexico newly arrived in the United States, likely never imagined that one day she would have two very important community roles: elected member of New Rochelle’s City Council representing District 1, and Director of Minority and Women-Owned Business Development and Immigrant Affairs for Westchester County.**



*Photo Credit: New Rochelle City*



**That's a mouthful. Imagine how busy Martha is every single day, working to improve the lives of all those who live in New Rochelle and Westchester County. In her role, she helps a lot of families who were immigrants like her. She can empathize with them because their experiences remind her of her own.**

**Here's what Martha says about it:**

*All immigrants face the same things like language barriers and cultural constraints.*

**It doesn't matter where you come from. You can be an immigrant from Haiti, El Salvador, Russia, Ukraine, Venezuela, Kosovo, Poland, St. Lucia, Ecuador, Guatemala, or France!**

**Every immigrant who comes to the United States shares a similar story. You arrive, everything is new, you need to adjust, find a place to live, get a job, enroll in school, learn English, and make new friends.**

**Latinx people in the United States come from a *lot* of different places—over thirty different countries and within each country, lots of different kinds of places from mountains to coasts!**

**Martha says, “*Latinos come in all shapes. We can be white. We can be Black. We can be indigenous. We can be Asian.*” Of course, every story is different, too. Each person and their family has a particular situation, coming from a unique culture and living in a different moment in history.**



**Martha's family has a very interesting history. Her father comes from a family of fishermen on the coast of Veracruz, Mexico. Her mother comes from an indigenous community three hours away in Puebla! Her parents got together in Mexico City.**



**Martha's parents strongly believed in the value of a good education, which was challenging to get in Mexico. Her father and mother emigrated all the way from Mexico City to Mamaroneck, New York looking for a better life for their children and more opportunities for the whole family.**



*It's about  
2,600 miles  
from Mexico City  
to Mamaroneck,  
New York!*

**Despite moving to another country, Martha's family held strongly onto their roots. Martha explains:**

***You should never, never stop celebrating, because that is you. That's your identity. And even though I have been here fifty years, I still eat tacos at home. I still like to visit Mexico. I will never forget about Mexico, my roots.***

Photo Credit: Jhud

**Back in 1973, there Martha was, a fifteen year old Spanish-speaking teenager enrolled in Mamaroneck High School with only ten other Latinx students in the whole school.**

**Martha and her best friend felt they were seen as different by their classmates. They separated themselves into their own little bubble. This was difficult for friendly Martha. She explains:**

***When you are growing up, you want to be part of the team, and you want everyone to be your friend.***

**Martha especially struggled since she didn't speak English. While she was learning English, she became very shy and embarrassed to talk to people, especially in the different jobs she worked, such as babysitting. She found her comfort zone volunteering at the local library and teaching Spanish.**

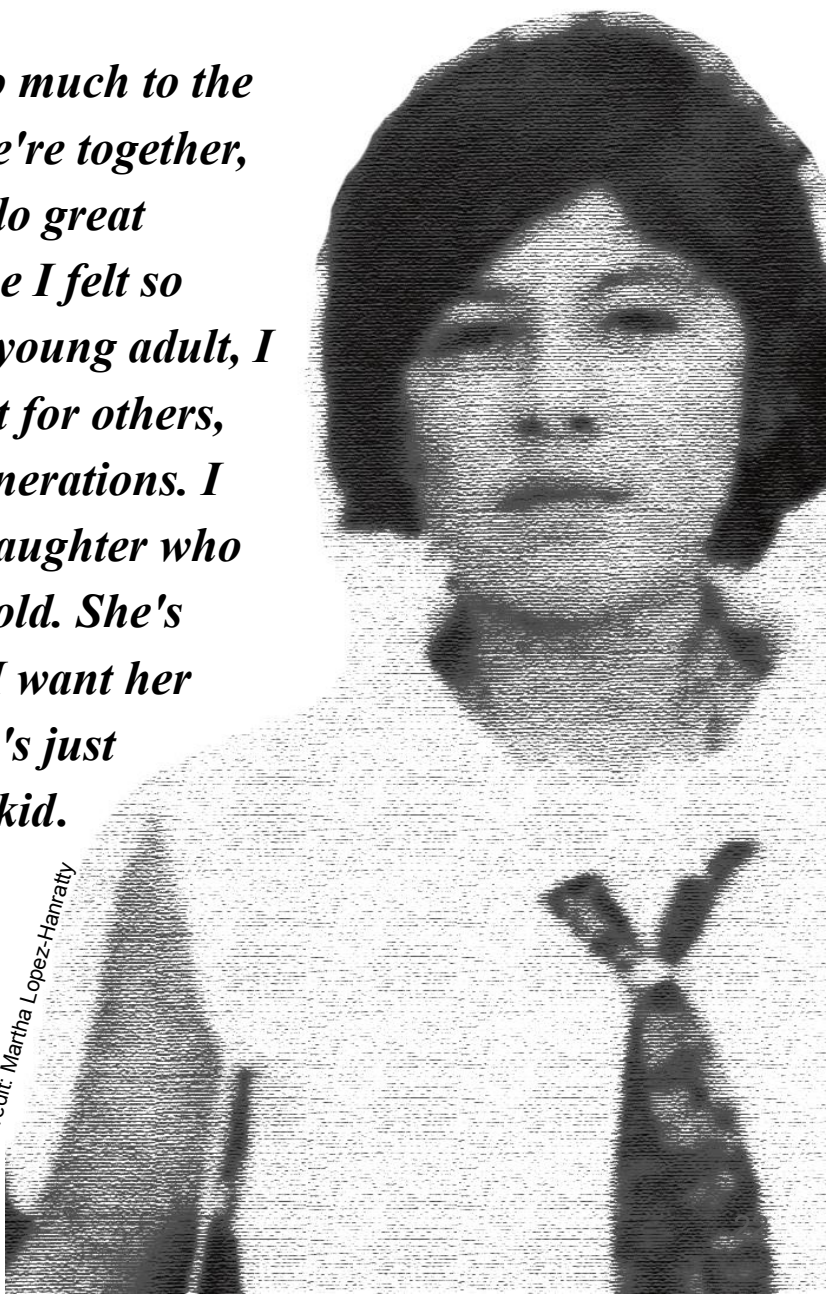


**She might have felt lonely but she was also inspired to study, to make her parents proud, and to help other immigrants find their way in what is for them *A New World*.**

**Martha says:**

*We all bring so much to the table. When we're together, we really can do great things. Because I felt so alienated as a young adult, I don't want that for others, for the new generations. I have a granddaughter who is seven years old. She's part Chinese. I want her to feel that she's just like any other kid.*

Photo Credit: Martha Lopez-Hanraaty



**As Martha grew up, she worked for several not-for-profit organizations and developed a growing love to help people and to make the world a better place. Every time someone said, “I don’t think you can do it,” Martha was motivated to show them that she can and she will. She attended CUNY’s Lehman College where she studied Sociology and later, received her Master’s Degree in Social Work from Columbia University!**

**Because of her own experiences, Martha knew she wanted to support those experiencing a vulnerable situation and help make life less difficult for them.**

**It would be great if we had more people like Martha who is always ready to welcome new immigrants. After all, says Martha,**

***It’s important for us to learn about each other and respect one another.***



**In her political position on New Rochelle’s City Council and in her Westchester County job supporting women and immigrants, Martha helps people fulfill their potential and their dreams.**

**Martha offers these words of wisdom to anyone with self-doubt:**

*Even when you question yourself, even when you think that you are not part of the mainstream, there's always something that makes us shine.*



*We all bring a special gift. There will always be an opportunity for you to shine and feel like, ‘Yes, I can do this!’*

**As an immigrant and as a woman, Martha is determined to show the world that she is capable of everything she puts her mind to, and that every other young woman is equally capable.**

**On this, Martha says, *“I can do it because I'm a hard worker and I know that I will do a good job. I want kids to believe that nothing is impossible.”***

**Martha offers this advice to young girls:**

***Trust your gut, always go to the person you trust, give it all you've got, don't doubt yourself, and understand that you might not win every single time.***

**In the future, Martha hopes to continue to represent her district in New Rochelle and to create new ways for all to come together in the richness of our diversity.**

Photo Credit: democracy engine



**She plans to start a new program that will enable diverse people in Westchester to come together and find ways to collaborate peacefully and fairly. Marta is an optimist. She says, “*I see the glass as half full.*”**

# Meet Christine Roth

**Forty-four years ago, Christine came to the Big Apple from Senegal, almost 4,000 miles away. Born and raised in Senegal, West Africa, Christine grew up in a half French, half Senegalese family.**

**Christine has spent her career working in an agency of the United Nations that helps with economic development. She has worked to address issues of economic and social inequities around the globe, especially in Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and a bit in Africa.**

**Christine now lives in New Rochelle and works as a consultant for the United Nations. In her retirement, she continues to advocate for social justice around the world.**

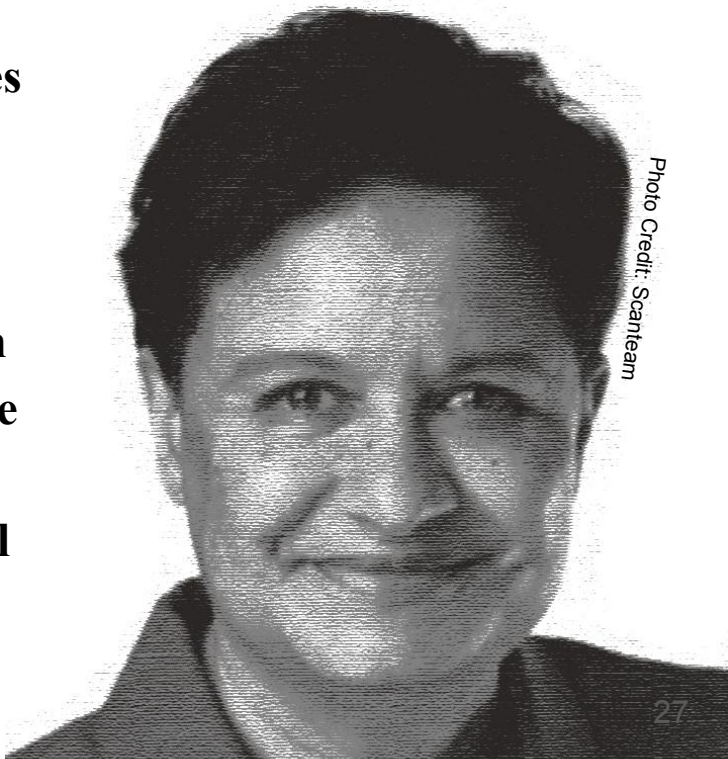


Photo Credit: Scanteam

**In Senegal, Christine grew up in a close-knit traditional family and with a strict upbringing. Her father worked as an engineer and her mother as a social worker. Christine and her two siblings learned French in the household and Christine attended an all-girls Catholic school.**

**For Christine's family, the mix of French and Senegalese culture was normal and blended very well. This makes sense since Senegal is a former French colony.**

**Christine explains how the blend of cultures was evident through the mix of Muslim and Christian holidays that she and her friends grew up celebrating together, like Christmas and Eid.**

**As a young girl, Christine loved listening to French songs and eating a mix of both Senegalese and French food. She was captivated by the stories told through the songs and the flavors in the delicious meals.**

**She still loves this music, cooks her favorite meals on a regular basis, and celebrates all the same holidays she did as a child.**

**But, Christine found growing up in Senegal to be challenging in some ways. As a young girl, she found it difficult to find out who she was as an individual.**



*Photo Credit: istock photo*

*Yassa, a French-inspired Senegalese dish made of spices, chicken, and onions.*

**She found Senegal to be a conservative and restrictive society. When Christine was growing up, girls couldn't really have boyfriends, dress however they wanted, express their opinions too openly, go out late, go to the movies alone, and live alone. They were pressured to be married at a young age.**

**Even those young Senegalese girls who attended university were not expected to live on campus, but with their parents, until they were married.**

**We all face pressure to appear a certain way or conform to social and cultural expectations. For Christine, the pressure to conform was extremely widespread and baked into the systems, processes, and beliefs of that society.**

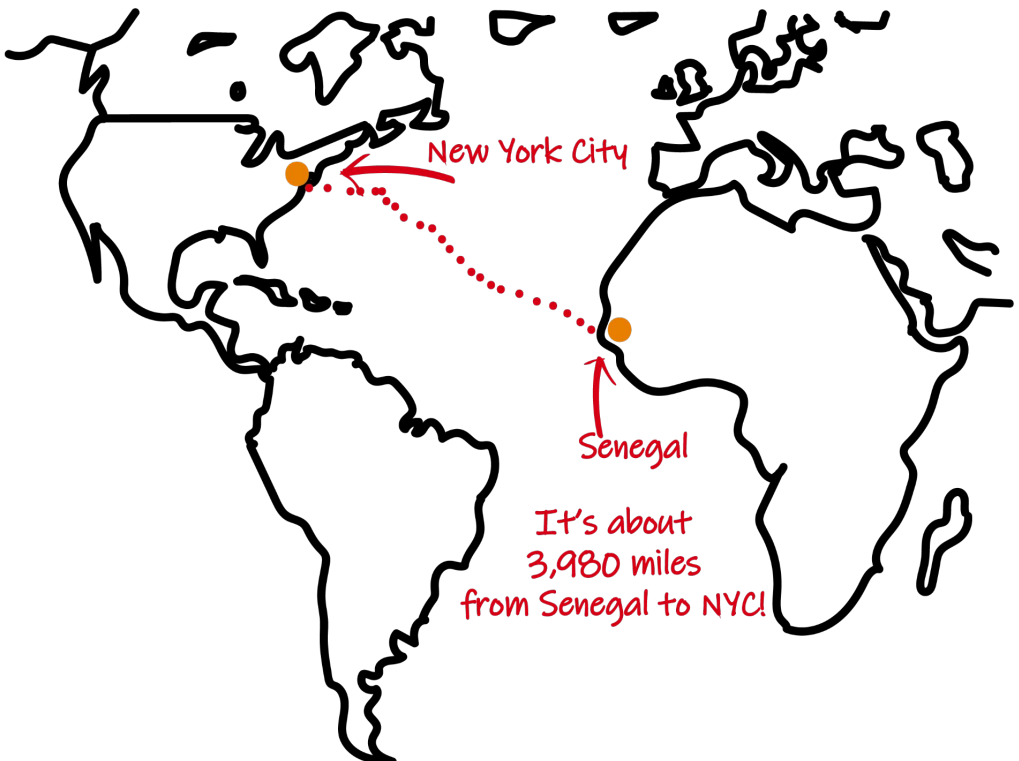
**Christine had a different vision for her future. She made the decision to come to the United States as an adult, interested in improving her English and continuing her education.**



**Upon arriving in the U.S., she enrolled in Pace University to get her Master's in Business Administration.**

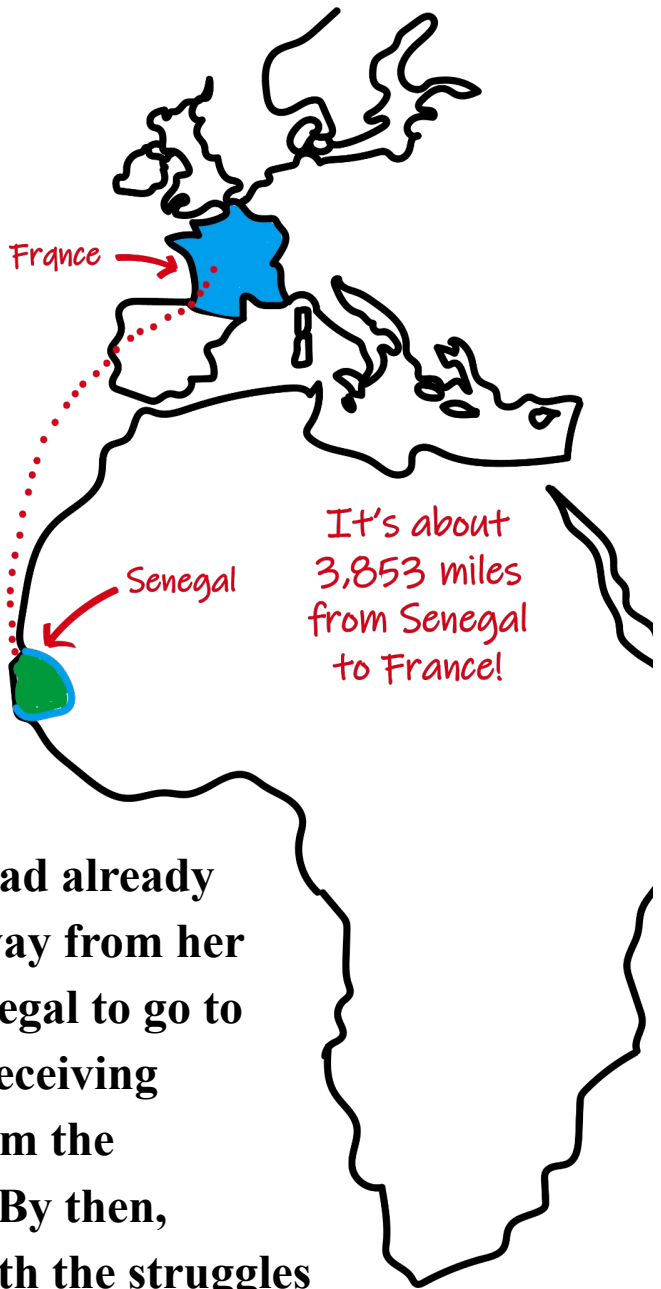
**Christine arrived all alone, not knowing anyone in the United States except one childhood friend with whom she was able to connect here on U.S. soil.**

**Imagine traveling by yourself to a new country almost 4,000 miles away all alone, even as a grown-up!**





**Christine did have some experience that helped her through the process of moving alone to the United States.**



**As a teenager she had already spent some time away from her family. She left Senegal to go to School in France, receiving a college degree from the University of Nice. By then, she was familiar with the struggles of being alone and knew she was capable of overcoming the hardships, loneliness, and insecurities that she might encounter.**

**Even so, Christine still experienced what you might call “culture shock.”**

**Although the United States was known globally as a “melting pot,” she noticed that different cultures were widely segregated throughout neighborhoods, and not everyone was tolerant of differences.**

**Christine did not always feel as challenged academically in the U.S. as she had expected. Her experience with education in Senegal and France was mostly centered on memorizing difficult content and repeating it. When Christine came to the U.S., she noticed that the math she was doing in university she had already completed in high school!**

**However, Christine was challenged in other ways. She found herself in academic and professional settings where she was expected to form her own ideas, express them, debate them, and defend them in front of others.**

**Christine who describes herself as a natural introvert, had to learn how to assert herself in her education and her career, which she clearly has overcome over the years!**

**As Christine expresses it:**

*It took me four years to realize who I was, where I felt comfortable to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them to move forward.*

Photo Credit: Christine Roth



**Once Christine figured out who she was and how to show others her abilities, she realized that it made her a well rounded person. She was able to be open to understanding people from different backgrounds and seeing things in a less “wrong or right” manner.**

**Christine says:**

***You have to realize that your way of life is not everybody's way of life. It is important to open your mind to other cultures and be curious about other people and places.***

**While she was studying at Pace University, Christine received an offer from the United Nations to work there for three months. This was an opportunity of a lifetime!**

**She took the job and enjoyed it so much that soon after, she became a full time employee of the United Nations, working at their headquarters in New York City!**



**Over the years, Christine built an incredibly successful career in the United Nations, where she has had a real, meaningful impact on the world through her work in countries like Afghanistan.**

**As Christine winds down her career, she reflects on the amazing friendships she has made and the lessons of tolerance she has gained from working in the United Nations.**

**Her experience reminds her that no matter where you are in the world, girls and women need to find those spaces for themselves where they can realize their full potential.**



**Christine remains passionate about striving for gender equality, reducing the extreme wealth gaps that exist globally, and making sure people have opportunities to work with dignity.**

**As we move into the future, we see more women being part of the government and business and changing the norms for women all over the world.**

**Christine hopes to continue making a difference in the world by being a consultant with organizations that in her words, *“advance the cause of social justice. [I] work on projects where I can help countries unlock their potential.”***



Photo Credit: Christine Roth

**Christine wants young girls all over the world to know that they are smart, strong, and valuable as individuals, and to understand the impact they can have on other people. She hopes that girls– like those of you reading this book–will stand up for themselves, fight for the right to be who they are, be open to learning from others, and be compassionate.**

**Most of all, Christine hopes that this new generation of young girls will trust themselves.**

**She offers this advice:**

*Trust and do not be afraid of making mistakes because you learn from those mistakes.*

# Meet Watfa Shama

**Born and raised in the Bronx to a Palestinian father and a Brazilian mother, Watfa is one of five children. She may never have imagined that she would become Principal of the PS 47, The American Sign Language and English Secondary School, New York City Department of Education.**

**Now living in White Plains, Watfa serves the students of New York City with a fierce passion to show every child they are capable of amazing things.**



Photo Credit: New York Public Radio



**Watfa's story begins all the way back in Palestine, around the time of the Arab-Israeli war of 1948.**

**This war brought violence to people's doorsteps and caused a lot of bloodshed for everyday people, including Watfa's family.**

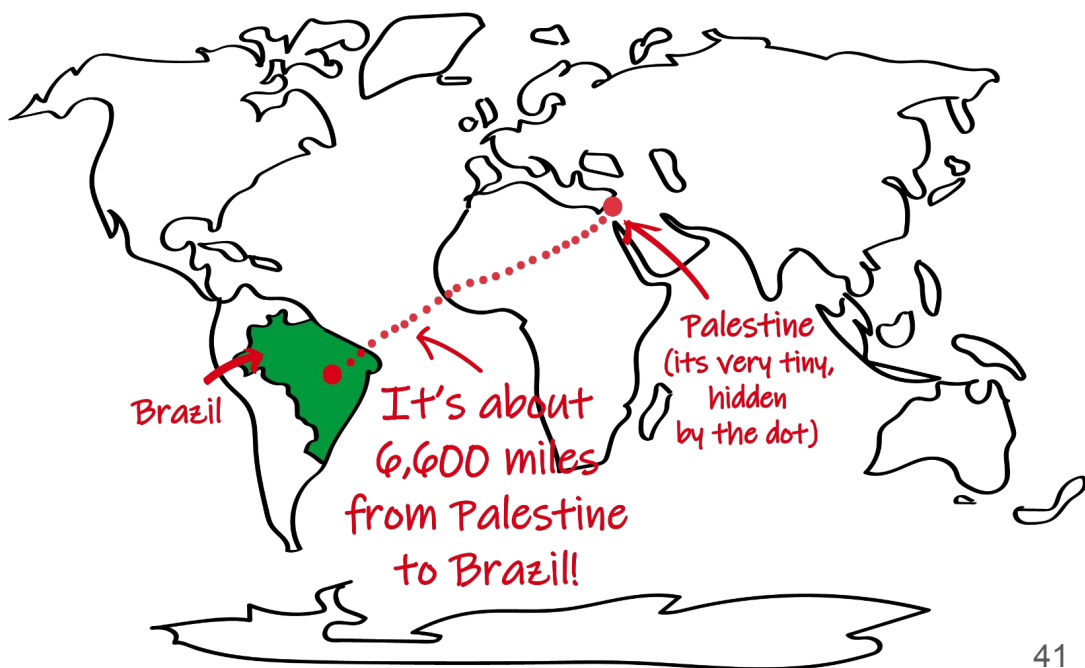
### Map of Israel and Palestine

(from 1948, nowadays, Palestinians have less land than before)



**Watfa's grandparents suffered terrible losses and heartbreak during this war. One of her uncles was killed, and another lost his leg. Desperate to save the rest of his children, Watfa's Muslim grandfather sent her father to South America through the Catholic Church in the hopes that his life would be spared.**

**At the age of just 16, Watfa's father left Palestine and his entire family all by himself. After traveling almost 7,000 miles, Watfa's father ended up in Brazil, which is in South America.**



Soon after, he met a Brazilian woman who became his wife. The couple dreamed of coming to the United States to start a family and build a good life for them, but struggled due to restrictions on the number of Arabs that could come into the country.



Eventually, in the 1960s, the couple was finally able to immigrate to the United States, and made a home in the Bronx, New York.

**Watfa's parents were hard workers, struggling to make ends meet and raise a growing family in New York City. Her father sold socks and jewelry on the street and her mother stayed at home to take care of their five children.**

**Growing up as a Palestinian-Brazilian in a predominately Puerto Rican neighborhood in the Bronx was not simple for Watfa or her siblings. They wanted desperately to fit in and be "American" like everyone else. But they didn't look, act, or sound like everyone else.**

**Watfa's family was very poor, they ate different foods, they celebrated different holidays, they spoke two different languages at home, some of the members of her family have darker skin, and they even practiced two different religions in their home since their father was a devout Muslim and their mother a devout Catholic.**

**Watfa recalls often feeling shame and embarrassment during those years. Some of this was due to racism and discrimination. Watfa and her family were the only Arabs in their neighborhood. They were scared to tell people this. Watfa says, “*There was a fear of being who we are because people didn't trust Arabs... ‘Arabs’ were given such a bad reputation.*”**

**Imagine growing up feeling as if you are so different from everyone else around you!**

**Now, Watfa sees her experiences growing up differently. She realizes how much her parents sacrificed to give her the life she had.**

Photo Credit: Watfa Shama



**Watfa realized that:**

*It's not easy for your parents to leave everything they know and love, and come and try to find a job somewhere else. My perspective over time has changed. It went from being embarrassed about being poor, to now, as a 50 year old woman, being proud of where I came from, and all the accomplishments I was able to achieve because of the sacrifices my parents made.*

**Watfa eventually learned to embrace the multiculturalism of her upbringing and her community. She spoke Portuguese and Arabic at home, learned English in school, and Spanish on the streets. She went to Catholic school during the week and Muslim school during the weekend. Her family celebrated Easter and Christmas but also Eid and Palestinian Thanksgiving... Her family still celebrates all of these holidays to this day!**

**Watfa came to love that she embodied all this diversity in her appearance and in her lifestyle. With her lighter skin, ethnic features, and dark, curly hair, Watfa's ethnicity was a mystery to many people: Was she Arab? Latina? Jewish? Greek? Brazilian? Who could tell?**

**She also had friends from all sorts of groups. She listened to music from various cultures. She ate rice and beans, oxtail, falafel, and even cow's brains!**



Photo Credit: Watfa Shama

**Even though she embraced her multiculturalism, life wasn't easy for Watfa. People constantly doubted her abilities and judged her because of her culture, ethnicity, and religion.**

**She remembers that one time, at Lehman High School in the Bronx, a teacher told her that school was a waste of time for her since her father was going to marry her off and she would never amount to anything. As Watfa explains:**

*I didn't think I was worthy of getting an education. I didn't think I was worthy ... I wasn't American. These people already identify me as someone else. So why should I be any different than they expect?*

**All this had a bad impact on how Watfa perceived herself and her possibilities in life. She found herself believing the negative things people said about her, which led her to skip school, not do her homework, and hang out with the wrong crowd.**



**But then, things changed. Watfa remembered that her parents came to the United States to give her the opportunities for an education that they never had. By not giving herself a fair chance at education, she was wasting the sacrifices her parents made.**

**By internalizing the negative things people said about her, Watfa realized she was feeding their hate. She was becoming her own worst enemy. She knew she couldn't waste her opportunities and disappoint her family so she decided to take control of her own destiny, remembering what her father had said to her:**

*The only thing someone can't take away from you is your education. They can take your money, they can take your clothes, they can take your house, but an education is something that's yours, no one can take away from you.*

**Watfa began to push herself. Motivated to defy the predictions of the people who didn't believe in her—and especially that one teacher who so hurtfully discouraged her—Watfa began a new personal and educational journey.**

**She also started realizing that the barriers she faced as an Arab-Brazilian were similar to those experienced by her friends and peers who were Latinx, Black, and other people of color and from marginalized groups.**



Photo Credit: PS 47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School

**Watfa's resilience, determination, and perspective paid off!**

**She went to City College and then continued her education at the University of Miami. From there, she returned to New York to attend Teacher's College of Columbia University. She and her sisters were the first women from her father's village to graduate college!**

**It turns out that Watfa went from hating school to wanting to work in the school system! She found her love of helping students while tutoring for a math program. She built an amazing career in education ever since.**

**Watfa moved through the ranks of New York City's education system, from teacher, to dean, to assistant principal, to principal. At each step, she advocated for the rights of students of color and other marginalized students in public education.**

**Watfa reflects on her culture and upbringing as something that made her resilient. She had to overcome so many stereotypes, specifically about being a Palestinian woman. People called her offensive slurs, stereotyped her, made fun of her name, and expected less of her as a woman and as an individual just because of her ethnicity. Watfa offers these wise words:**

*There is nothing to be embarrassed about. Women should be respected. It's about respecting and enlightening people and having people understand...and trying to overcome this negativity around Arabs and Palestinians.*

Photo Credit: Watfa Shama



**Unfortunately, the horrible events of the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center in 2001 led to a backlash against Arabs across the United States.**

**As you can imagine, the discrimination Watfa faced got even worse, although these were exactly the years in which her career was supposed to take off. Watfa felt *“this fear of telling people who you are...because people just automatically thought you were a terrorist.”***

**In those years, it was difficult for Watfa to get jobs as an Arab woman, *“people would not even look at my resumé because of my name.”***

**Nevertheless, Watfa persevered. Not only does Watfa have a successful and impactful career as a public school principal at the American Sign Language and English High School in New York City, she is also a mother to two teenagers whom she adopted from foster care when they were babies, raising them as a single mother.**

**Watfa is passionate about people’s rights to be individuals and to the basic necessities of life, “somewhere to live, education... the right to be who you are.” In the future, Watfa hopes to continue her work in student advocacy, especially for every student’s right to a safe education and against bullying.**

**Watfa hopes to encourage young people to avoid “judging a book by its cover,” to remember that there is strength in difference, and that everyone regardless of their religion, race, ability, or disability deserves the same rights and the chance to succeed. She hopes that people will respect others and treat people with the kindness and compassion they want for themselves. Because in the end, as Watfa explains:**

*I want people to treat me and those around me how they want to be treated, and how they want their children to be treated.*

# Conclusion

**These three amazing women have come from different backgrounds and faced different kinds of challenges as they grew up, gained their education, and established themselves in their professions.**

**Although each of their backgrounds is different, there are many similarities in their experiences and what they learned along the way.**

**Today, all three live in Westchester County, making a constant impact on our community and the world.**

**They show us that we, too, can make a difference no matter where we come from, what culture we identify with, the color of our skin, our religion, or what our native language is!**

**I hope my book inspires readers to: Learn more about their family’s history of immigration; explore how their culture contributes and helps shape U.S. culture overall; and discover the ways in which all our lives are enriched by our diversity.**

**To all readers of this book, I hope these women’s stories inspire you to...**

- **Define yourself, instead of letting others define you.**
- **Take advantage of the opportunity to get a good education.**
- **Visualize and create your own path to success.**
- **Remember that multiculturalism and diversity are superpowers!**
- **Not forget where you came from; use your experiences to have compassion for others and to try to make the world a better place.**
- **Recognize that there are still people who believe that women can’t accomplish what men can and prove them wrong!**



**Lastly, and possibly most importantly,**

**Martha, Christine and Watfa– like many women from all over– are doing amazing things everyday! They work in all fields and at local, national and international levels to make a real difference in the world.**

**Someday, this can be you!**

# Discussion Guide for Girl Scout Troops

**1. I wrote in this book that “the United States is made up of immigrants.” How long has your family been in the United States? What is your family’s immigrant story?**

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**2. What aspects of your family’s cultural heritage do you still retain (for example, traditions, language, religion, music, foods, etc.)?**

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**3. There are various maps in this book. Find a world map and trace your family migration. Think about that journey. What do you think that journey was like in those times? How do you imagine your family traveled? What would that have been like?**

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**4. If you had to move to another country and leave everything from your past behind, would you rather go as an adult or a child? What are the pros and cons of those situations?**

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**5. What are the differences, in your opinion, between coming to the United States as an immigrant and coming with a work or student visa?**

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6. **In what ways do you think being a woman and coming to the United States is a different experience from a man's? Why do you think that is?**

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**7. This book tells the story of three women who have had very different experiences. In what ways are their stories similar, and how are they different?**

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**8. Which of the women's stories is the most similar to the experiences of anyone in your family? What about it is similar and different? How did these experiences impact the people in your family?**

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**9. The book mentions barriers that different people face when attempting to migrate to the United States. Explore what those barriers might have been then and what they might be today. Think about how they might be different for people because of technology, economics, politics, and other circumstances.**

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**10. Can you think of ways in which multiculturalism has shaped what we consider to be “American” culture? (hint- foods, music, language, art, traditions, etc.)?**

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**11. Aside from your own cultures or heritages, which other ones are you most curious about and why?**

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**12. What, if anything, did you learn from this book that you didn't know before? How, if at all, did reading this book make you think differently about immigrants, immigration, and the immigrant experience?**

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**13. Discrimination and racism are themes in this book. What do those words mean to you?**

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- 14. Have you ever been treated badly because of the way you dress, what you eat, your skin color, your religion, the language your family speaks, or anything else? How did that make you feel and what, if anything, did you do about it?**

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**15. Have you ever seen anyone else be treated badly for those reasons? How did that make you feel and what, if anything, did you do about it?**

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**16. Even though the United States is so diverse and multicultural, unfortunately, there is still a lot of discrimination against people who seem “different.” What do you think society needs to do to end discrimination?**

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**17. How can we, as Girl Scouts, help make things easier for people in our community who have recently come to the United States from other countries?**

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# **Create your own Oral History Project!**

**Does this book inspire you to write the oral history of someone you know? On the following pages are the questions I used for my interviews with my research subjects. Feel free to use these questions or create your own, and the note pages that follow to get your project started!**

**1. Introduction**

- a. Basic details: Name, age, country/culture of origin
- b. Where you live and a little about your family
- c. What you currently do for work (title and place of work)

**2. Background**

- a. What is your family's migration history? When and why did you (or your parents/family) leave your original country?)
- b. Where did your family first go in the United States?
- c. What was it like for you growing up? How did your experience of being an immigrant or the child of immigrants shape your childhood?
- d. What are some of your favorite and your most difficult memories of your childhood?
- e. Tell me about your culture. Growing up, what about your cultural background did you enjoy/cherish the most? (foods, music, traditions, rituals, etc.)? What, if anything, were you embarrassed about or wanted to hide from others? Why?
- f. Are there any traditions from that culture that you still celebrate today? If so, describe.

**3. Shaping your identity:**

- a. How did your upbringing shape you and define who you are today?
- b. How is it different being a woman from your home country vs U.S.? (cultural and community norms for women)? How would your life have been different if you or your family hadn't immigrated here?
- c. How does the intersectionality of different cultures/aspects of your identity play a role in who you've become? (American culture, your culture of origin, your race, your gender, etc.?)
- d. What are you most passionate about?
- e. What is the biggest struggle that you've faced?

4. **Your education and career:**

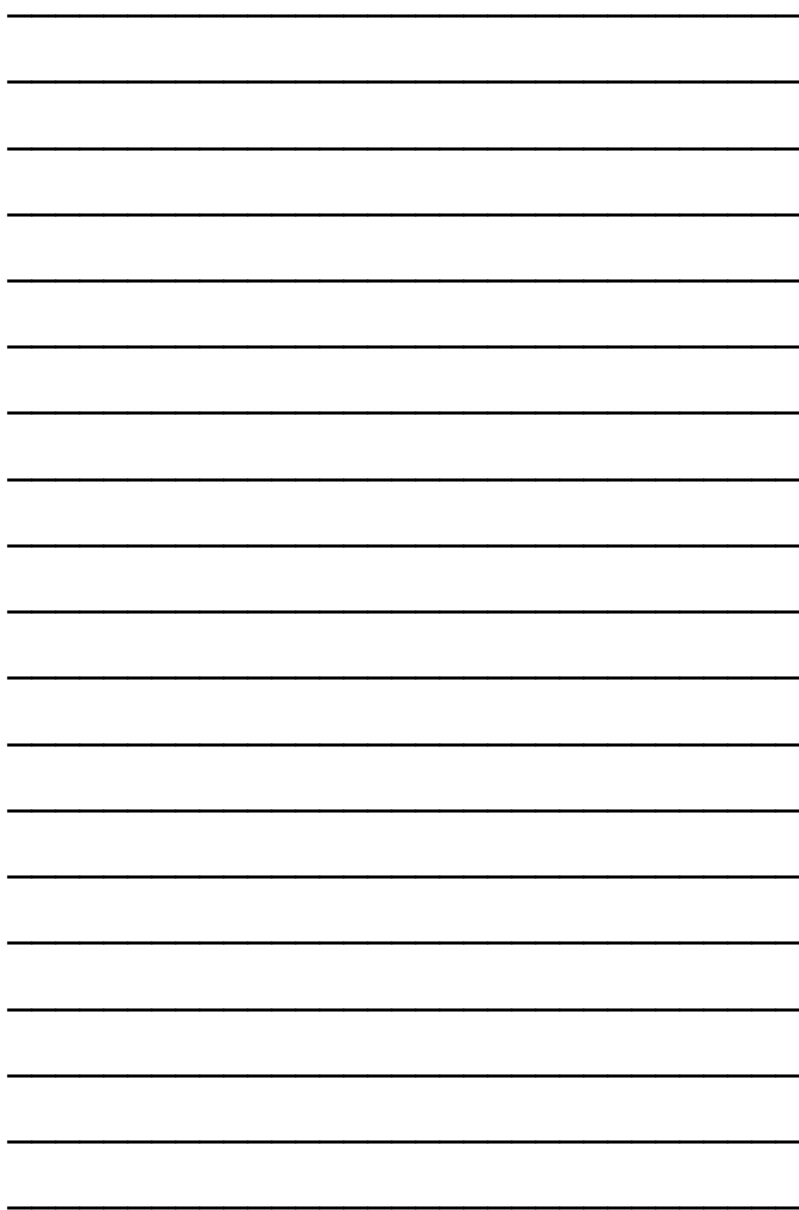
- a. Tell me about your education. Where did you go to High School? Did you go to college? Graduate school? Etc.?
- b. How did your educational experience impact you, both personally and professionally?
- c. Tell me about how you became (INSERT CAREER HERE).
- d. When did you decide you wanted to become (INSERT CAREER HERE) and what were the biggest influences on your decision to pursue this?
- e. What was the first job you ever had and how did your career progress?
- f. What, if any, adversity did you find along the way, both during your education as well as in the early days of your career development, and how did you overcome that adversity?
- g. How do you think your experiences in school and career would have been different if you had been from a different background or grown up differently?
- h. How, if at all, has your background helped you professionally? What kind of impact does it have on your perspective, on how you do your job, on how you interact with others, etc.?
- i. You are a leader in your community and in your career. When did you first realize you had leadership skills? What do you think makes you an effective leader?

5. **Relationship to Westchester:**

- a. How did you end up here in Westchester?
- b. In your view, what is special/unique about Westchester?
- c. How has living/working in Westchester contributed positively or negatively to your success?
- d. There is a lot of diversity in Westchester- racial, ethnic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic. How do you think this impacts kids growing up in Westchester today?

6. **Looking to the future:**

- a. What are your goals for the future, both professionally and personally?
- b. What was the biggest life lesson you have learned?
- c. What's something you would say to younger you that you wish someone had told you when you were growing up?
- d. Do you feel that today, it is harder, easier, or about the same for young girls from backgrounds like yours to achieve the kind of success you have? Why?
- e. If you could give one piece of advice to girls growing up like you did who want to be a leader in her community and career, what would it be?





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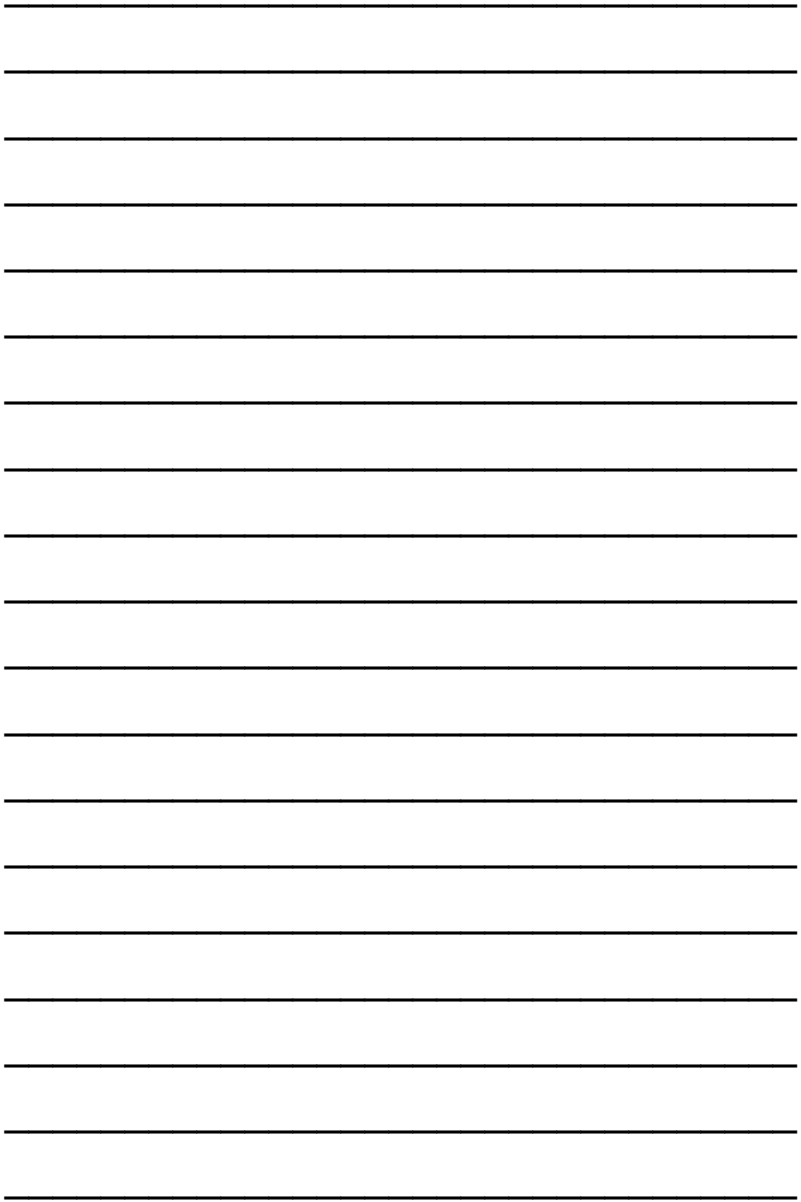
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# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Hubbard, Kaia. “The 10 Most Racially Diverse States in the U.S. .” *U.S. News & World Report*, U.S. News & World Report L.P., 19 Aug. 2021, [www.usnews.com/news/best-states/slideshows/the-10-most-racially-diverse-states-in-the-us](http://www.usnews.com/news/best-states/slideshows/the-10-most-racially-diverse-states-in-the-us).
- <sup>3</sup>McCann, Adam. “2023’s Most Diverse Cities in the U.S.” *WalletHub*, Evolution Finance, Inc., 17 Apr. 2023, [wallethub.com/edu/most-diverse-cities/12690](http://wallethub.com/edu/most-diverse-cities/12690).
- <sup>2</sup>“Our Changing Population: Westchester County, New York.” *USAFacts*, USA Facts, July 2022, [usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/new-york/county/westchester-county/?endDate=2021-01-01&startDate=2010-01-01](http://usafacts.org/data/topics/people-society/population-and-demographics/our-changing-population/state/new-york/county/westchester-county/?endDate=2021-01-01&startDate=2010-01-01).