



Creating Curious, Courageous, and Engaged Citizens

# THE SAMANTHA SMITH CHALLENGE 2018/19

## Social Justice Through the Arts

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### AWTT MISSION

The Americans Who Tell the Truth portraits and narratives highlight citizens who courageously address issues of social, environmental, and economic fairness. By combining art and other media, AWTT offers resources to inspire a new generation of engaged Americans who will act for the common good, our communities, and the Earth.

### TAKE THE SAMANTHA SMITH CHALLENGE!

At the depths of the Cold War, when hot war between the Soviet Union and the United States seemed likely, a frightened young girl from Maine did something about that grim situation. [Samantha Smith](#) began by asking “Why?” She went on to advocate for open communication and peace. A compelling storyteller, Samantha left us a legacy and an inspiring challenge:

**What can each of us do to make the world safer, healthier, and more fair?**

### YOU’LL FIND THE FOLLOWING IN THIS DOCUMENT:

- Important dates and deadlines.
- The new focus for the SSC.
- Starting points and activities for exploring identity, race, class, gender, and age.
- Activity to connect with Americans Who Tell the Truth website.
- Guidelines for the 2018-19 SSC -- Social Justice through the Arts.



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**SSC MISSION:** The Samantha Smith Challenge is a dynamic educational program for Maine middle school students that helps them explore their identities in the classroom and the world as they become curious, courageous, and engaged citizens. Students learn that, no matter what age, they can be part of solving the challenges and problems they see around them.

**THE POWER OF PARTNERS:** The **Americans Who Tell the Truth (AWTT)** organization's ability to bring the SSC service learning program into Maine schools and to honor [Samantha Smith](#) by encouraging students to act in her spirit depends on our strong partnerships with the **Maine Association for Middle Level Education** and **Thomas College's Center for Innovation in Education**.

## **THE 2018-19 SSC CALENDAR**

- **October 16, 2018:** SSC Guidelines Available - 4th Annual SSC Registration Opens
- **OCTOBER 18-19, 2018:** Launch 4th Annual SSC at MAMLE Conference.
- **OCTOBER 22, 2018- FEBRUARY 1, 2019:** Complete "Get to Know AWTT" activity and submit SSC registration form.
- **MARCH/APRIL 2019:** SSC workshops/school visits.
- **MAY 17, 2019:** SSC project reports submitted to AWTT.
- **JUNE 3, 2019:** Everyone attends the Samantha Smith Day celebration!

## **SAMANTHA SMITH CHALLENGE 2018-19 – A NEW AND IMPORTANT FOCUS...IDENTITY**

The idea of the American Dream is founded in the presumption that passion and persistence endow anyone of any race, class, gender, or age an equal shot at success. Access to the American Dream, however, often depends on identity. For example, poor people and people of color -- especially poor people of color -- have a harder time living out their dreams, living up to their potential, or simply living, than their more well-to-do white, fellow citizens. Class rigidity, racial, gender, and age prejudice are still woven tightly -- both consciously and unconsciously -- into the educational, legal, economic, social, and environmental fabrics that govern our lives.

Maine is often described as the one of the most racially homogenous states in the country making people think that racism doesn't need to be addressed here. Census figures indicate that the Pine Tree State is slowly becoming more racially and culturally diverse. Ethnic populations increased in all 16 counties between 2000 and 2010. The demographics of Maine are changing. Maine also continues to have some of the most intransigent poverty in the country with a poverty rate of nearly 13% (16% of Mainers and 20% of Maine children experience food insecurity).

This year we ask you, the SSC students, to think first about your own identity. Who are you? Consider the identities that, for the most part, are unchangeable -- race, ethnicity, gender, age -- and also those identities you can choose -- beliefs, clothing styles, groups you join, issues you engage, etc. How do these characteristics affect your expectations for yourself? How do they affect others' expectations for you?

As you look around, in your community or across the state, nation, and world, think about how these identities and expectations affect others. How does this combination of identity and expectation connect to the justice and equity issues you see?

Choose one or more parts of ***your identity*** and explore ***its connection to a local or national equity or social justice issue***. (See **A LOOK AT IDENTITY** section)

As you contemplate social justice concerns, consider the following guiding questions:

### **General**

- What are some connections between identity and race, class, gender/age?
- What are some connections between expectations and race, class, gender/age?

## Issue Specific

- What are the similarities and differences between how people in Maine are treated when they are poor; when they are of color; when they are young; when they are wealthy; when they are disabled; when they are LGBTQ? What happens when more than one of these identities applies to one person?
- Where do you see racism in Maine?
- Where do you see discrimination in Maine?
- How do we work towards racial justice and equity?
- Where do we see economic and gender inequality in our state and nation?
- How do we work towards economic and gender justice and equity?
- Who needs to be part of the conversation as you address these issues?
- What is meant by “the two Maines”? How do we address this division?
- How is difference defined in different parts of Maine? Think about class and geography.
- How do we welcome and embrace the talents and challenges of Maine’s immigrant community?
- What is environmental racism? How do we address it?

**IDENTITY, RACE, CLASS, GENDER, AND AGE: STARTING POINTS...**



“Why is Maine so white? And why does it matter?”

<http://bangordailynews.com/2012/09/14/politics/understanding-why-maine-is-so-white/>

Maine Public Health Data Reports

Healthy Maine 2010: Race and Ethnicity

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-maine/documents/oppforall/b04raeth.pdf>

“What else do we need to believe racism exists?”

<https://bangordailynews.com/2018/03/27/opinion/contributors/what-else-do-we-need-to-believe-racism-exists/>

From The Telling Room (Portland) The Whole World is Waiting

<https://vimeo.com/56031166>

**A children’s book for everyone!**

*The Day You Begin* by Jacqueline Woodson Tells the story of the bravery it takes to be who you are.

**For those who might be inspired by music.**

*One Person* by Monte Selby and the 2017 SSC Participants

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcBuwzSH4sY>

*You Be You* by Monte Selby and Clear Creek Amana Middle School, Tiffin, Iowa, 2018.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBQyotXpvKg>

***This is the New Year by A Great Big World***

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27R\\_goWiAAU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27R_goWiAAU)

***Naughty from Matilda***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iKm1h0X6CB0>

***Hope* by Jason Robert Brown**

<http://jasonrobertbrown.com/2016/11/09/hope/>

***Interview with [Nicole Maines](#) (from Maine and AWTT) on Being a (trans) Superhero***

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/12/arts/television/nicole-maines-supergirl-transgender-interview.html>

## A LOOK AT IDENTITY:

***The following three short pieces are written by students who are actively exploring and deepening their sense of identity. All of these examples are from young people who have participated in Operation Breaking Stereotypes (OBS) exchanges. OBS is a partner organization to Americans Who Tell the Truth and run by AWTT's Education Director, Connie Carter.***

1. For me white always meant pale. White just never really meant “Caucasian” to me until I went on my first OBS trip in the summer before my eighth grade year. I remember arriving at the bus station and being shuffled onto the subway where I didn't really stand out at first. As we took more and more stops on the way to St. Anne's church all of the white people were getting off. Living in Maine I had never been in a situation where I had stood out because of my race. Here I was, sitting on a subway with a group of Maine kids and we were all sticking out like a bunch of sore thumbs. I think someone even asked us where we were going because we clearly looked like we didn't belong. I remember thinking...I mean really thinking about my race for the first time. Itsort-of dawned on me all at once and I thought, “Whoa...I'm white.”
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2. I am a 17 year old girl from a Catholic family. I am compassionate. I believe in a good education and that it helps you in life and your future. Behind my physical appearance, there's a lot more inside of me that some people don't see. I may be an outgoing girl or even just a girl who is silent and afraid to talk. But, inside me I am sometimes afraid to speak my thoughts. I am afraid I will be judged because my background isn't diverse or I am not good enough.
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3. When I was in Africa, we had our own house; we had animals and a garden of our own. When I moved to the US, it was different. We lived in an apartment and there were things we couldn't have. Everything was different. That's when I



knew my family was poor. The US is just different for me; everything got harder. Life is just hard in the US. My life as a person was way better in Africa and the more I move the more I lose myself. I used to be a happy person but now I feel like I lost my happiness. I am not a happy person anymore.

## **EXERCISE: WHO ARE YOU?**

Read (<https://www.commonlit.org/texts/little-things-are-big>) or listen (<https://www.commonlit.org/texts/little-things-are-big>) to the following essay:

### **“Little Things are Big”**

**Complete the following activity:**

- Talk about the “real” and “assigned” identities of Jesus Colon.
  - List adjectives that describe his “real” identity – how he views himself.
  - List adjectives that describe his “assigned” identity – how others view him.
  - Talk about the differences and why those may exist.
- Ask students to do the same for themselves:
  - List adjectives that they would use to describe themselves
  - List adjectives others might use to describe them.
- Ask if one or two students are willing to share their lists.
- Talk again about what makes these two lists different and how the two lists may cause their opportunities and expectations to differ.

## **GET TO KNOW AMERICANS WHO TELL THE TRUTH -- CONNECT WITH PORTRAIT SUBJECTS:**

Before registering for the SSC complete this “Connect with Changemakers” activity with your students.



Becoming familiar with the Americans Who Tell the Truth portrait subjects is an important step in the Samantha Smith Challenge. The following *models of courageous citizenship* serve as motivational guides for students as they begin to explore how race, class, gender and age shape identity and expectations and influence social justice and equity issues in their communities and the world.

We suggest exploring the stories and social justice work of **at least two** of the following people:

**Samantha Smith**  
**Bree Newsome**  
**Kelsey Juliana**  
**Sherri Mitchell**  
**Larry Gibson**  
**LeAlan Jones**  
**Claudette Colvin**  
**Murphy Davis**  
**Bruce Gagnon**  
**Denise Giardina**  
**John Hunter**  
**Michelle Alexander**  
**Will Allen**  
**Esther Attean**  
**Ella Baker**  
**Dr. Rev. William Barber II**  
**Judy Bonds**  
**Betty Burkes**  
**Jon Oberg**  
**Utah Phillips**  
**Ai-Jen Poo**  
**Sister Lucy Poulin**  
**Florence Reed**  
**Lateefah Simon**  
**Diane Wilson**





***We have designed a worksheet (found at the end of this document) for your students to help them learn about the AWTT portrait subjects. You may complete this as a class or small groups or individuals. When you are done, please include the list of themes and portraits that your students have explored as part of your registration.***



## Connecting with Truth Tellers

1. Go to [www.americanswhotellthetruth.org](http://www.americanswhotellthetruth.org) Click on the Portrait Galleries tab and explore until you find two portrait subjects you have chosen to study.
2. Complete the following sentence for each portrait...
  - A. We have chosen this portrait subject because...
  
  - B. We have chosen this portrait subject because...
3. For each portrait subject complete the following:

**First portrait:**

  - Portrait subject name:
  - Issue addressed:
  
  - Look at the portrait. Answer the following questions:
    - A. How does the painting make you feel?
    - B. Why/How do you think the art makes you feel that way?
  
  - List three ways this person might identify him/herself, e.g. race, economic level, gender, ethnicity, age, profession, etc.
    - A.
    - B.
    - C.
  
  - List three things this person did to address his/her issue:
    - A.
    - B.
    - C.
  
  - In a short paragraph, say what motivated this person to commit time and energy to this issue?



### Second portrait:

- Portrait subject name:
- Issue addressed:
  
- Look at the portrait. Answer the following questions:
  - A. How does the portrait make you feel?
  - B. Why/how do you think art makes you feel that way?
  
- List three ways this person might identify him/herself, e.g. race, economic level, gender, ethnicity, age, profession, etc.
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  
- List three things this person did to address his/her issue:
  - A.
  - B.
  - C.
  
- In a short paragraph, say what motivated this person to commit time and energy to this issue?

**Now that you have completed this activity with your class, you can [register your class for the 2017/2018 Samantha Smith Challenge!](#) You will list the themes and portraits you studied on the registration form.**



## The Samantha Smith Challenge Guidelines

### Social Justice through the Arts

[\\*https://docs.google.com/document/d/16OookDtLui05S-8t5RFZZ9COqqVk97Nlr5DhWRfJggs/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/16OookDtLui05S-8t5RFZZ9COqqVk97Nlr5DhWRfJggs/edit)  
(to see 2018 SSC topics and reflections)

## YOUR MISSION IS TO ACT AND GET A RESPONSE!

Collaboration between classes and disciplines is encouraged!

### 4 Simple Steps to this year's Samantha Smith Challenge

- Consider the impact race, class, gender, and/or age have on social justice and equity and choose an issue that reflects this influence.
- Explore the following questions...
  - How do our personal experiences, our identities, and the expectations that come with those identities shape our concerns for social justice issues?
  - How/why can creative arts and writing inspire action on serious issues?
  - What strategies and actions in addition to your creative message can be used to provoke a response from your intended audience?
- Do Research.
- Create and communicate a message that provokes response to your issue.

## STEP ONE

### EXPRESSING CONCERNS, IDENTIFYING ISSUES

1. Students write **questions and concerns** they have about race, class, gender, and/or age in their lives, their community, nation, or world.

- **Identify common themes** among the concerns students have expressed.
- **Explore the AWTT website** for examples of people who have addressed similar themes (We suggest you start with the list created under "Connect with Portrait Subjects" or go to **Portrait Galleries**, click on **Themes**, find related theme and select it. *Need help finding portraits related to your theme? Get in touch with us! [connie@americanswhotellthetruth.org](mailto:connie@americanswhotellthetruth.org)*)
- **Select at least two portraits** and read about what each person did to address his/her topic?
  - How did race, class, gender, and/or age influence this person's issue?



- What did the person do to get a response e.g. write to stakeholders, create music, gather others to support the cause, etc.
  - What response did the person get? Was it the response they expected?
- **Invite a panel of community members** to talk with your class about the community concerns/issues/themes the students have identified **or** connect via Skype, e-mail, or in person with an AWTT portrait subject who is involved with these issues (AWTT can help connect you with people.)
- **Select your issue/s**, one or more social, environmental, or economic issues related to race, class, gender, and/or age to address as a class or in groups. Be as specific as possible. This will help students focus on making a difference.
- **Ask each student:** Why does this issue matter to you? How/Why does your identity connect you to this issue? (For motivation about how important “why” is, check out this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LZe5y2D60YU> )

## STEP TWO

### DO RESEARCH

1. **Students generate a list of questions** about all the things they don't know or understand about their chosen topics.
2. Individually or in teams, **students find answers to the questions** and become fact gathering machines!
  - a. Go back to the [Portrait Galleries on the AWTT](#) website. There they can learn about changemakers who addressed their issues (or related ones).
  - b. Pay special attention to what the people **DID** to make a difference and get a response about their issue. Explore the resources listed beside the portraits.
3. **Identify and interview local stakeholders** (people concerned about the issue).
  - a. Why is this issue important to them?
  - b. What connection does this issue have to their identity?
  - c. What are they doing to address the issue?
  - d. What is their strategy/plan for making a long-term difference?
  - e. What are the obstacles to improving this issue?
  - f. What else needs to be done?
  - g. How can we help?
4. **Contact AWTT to be connected to a living AWTT portrait subject** who can be a resource for your issue. ([connie@americanswhotellthetruth.org](mailto:connie@americanswhotellthetruth.org))



5. **Figure out who you want to respond to your message.** Parents? Teachers? Lawmakers? Other students? People in your community?

## **STEP THREE**

### **CREATING A POWERFUL MESSAGE -- INFORM, INSPIRE, GET A RESPONSE!**

1. Discuss not only *what* students want to say, but *how* they want to say it.

**KEY QUESTION:** *Who is the most appropriate audience/s for this message? Some options:*

- a. Help people in their communities to reimagine where they live.
- b. Provoke local authorities by calling out an injustice in the community.
- c. Inspire people to join the fight against climate change, homelessness, inequality, etc.
- d. Shed light on a practice or event most people don't know or don't understand.
- e. Encourage or challenge people in power who are doing good/not good work.

2. **Use the arts! Remember... The arts create a context for conversation. The creative arts cause people to ask questions that need to be asked.**

Make paintings, original musical compositions, essays, theater skits or any other form of creative expression that communicates the identified concern and responds to the academic needs of your classroom. (*Some students may choose their medium while others may be working in a specific class that teaches drawing or painting, theater or filmmaking where the medium will be defined by the teacher.*)

**\* See below for a list of possible creative art forms**

3. Get a response!!! Contact the target audience/s and schedule an exhibit, performance, forum or other method of presentation, connection, march, or happening. **Think about how to present the message to provoke the desired response.**

## **STEP FOUR**

### **ATTEND THE SSC CELEBRATION AND SHARE THE STORY OF YOUR JOURNEY**

Reflect on the following:

- What did you learn about your chosen issue?



- How do race, class, gender, and/or age impact your issue?
- What did you learn about your own identity and the expectations that come with that?
- Why do you think the using the arts to get a response to a concern works?
- What was the most challenging part of the SSC?
- What was the most rewarding part of the SSC?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND THOUGHTS:

### SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH THE ARTS

**It is clear that the** AWTT version of art-as-activism gives students the chance to juxtapose seemingly disparate issues and find commonalities. As we like to say, building the big tent and breaking down the silos. It forces people to understand the importance of dissent and disagreement in our society and how, sometimes, what seemed out of step with our culture becomes the accepted norm.

Samantha was a *narrative activist*. By telling *HER story* she changed *THE story* -- definitely a creative art! The power of the arts to deliver a message or to invoke action is indisputable. Americans Who Tell the Truth (AWTT) combines art and other media to inspire a new generation of engaged Americans who will act for the common good, our communities, and the Earth. Over thirty of the AWTT portrait subjects have used the creative arts to inspire action. We share here just a few examples:

- An international program entitled [Barefoot Artists](#), founded by artist [Lily Yeh](#) in 2002, trains and empowers local residents, organizes communities around communal art projects, and takes action for a more compassionate, just and sustainable future in countries such as Rwanda, Kenya, Ghana, Ecuador, and China; this program is an offshoot of the non-profit organization Yeh founded in 1986 called The Village of Arts and Humanities in Philadelphia which was developed to build communities through art, learning, land transformation, and economic development.
- Musician [David Rovics](#) believes music can connect people in ways nothing else can: "Keep writing. Keep earning. Be open to criticism from ourselves or others on music or politics. Never delude yourself into thinking you're original. Keep listening to music and learning songs other people wrote. Keep your heart open. See the world. Put yourself in other people's shoes regularly..."
- An education professor at Syracuse University, [Mara Sapon Shevin](#) says "I am very interested in continuing my work in community building and teaching for social justice through the arts. I give workshops on using music, dance and movement to teach about oppression and liberation and I hope to continue this work with more people of all ages and backgrounds."

## INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

While we are emphasizing creative expression -- storytelling, art making, drama, music -- as effective means of communicating about social justice, we do not expect the SSC to take place only -- or even primarily -- in art classes. This is about identifying important community and world issues, understanding them, and making a compelling argument in an effective medium. Think about it as combining any subject discipline with debate, service learning, and creative expression.

Each group involved in this year's SSC will use art, drama, music, spoken word, storytelling, media arts, dance, and other forms of creative expression to deliver a message about their chosen topic or issue. Paint a portrait of a truth teller in your community. Create a dramatic production or tell a compelling story about your issue. Write music that makes us feel braver and less alone. Write an essay that makes the most compelling argument you know for why we should all join you in your effort to make the world a better place.

## RESOURCES FOR THE SAMANTHA SMITH CHALLENGE

### CREATIVE ARTS FORMATS (a few possibilities)

- **A short story.** Pick one incident or critical moment and tell it as a first person story as though you were Barbara Johns, Samantha Smith, Abraham Lincoln, or another change maker.
- **A letter.** Write to the stakeholders and others in positions of responsibility with respect to the chosen issue. Explain what you do or don't understand about his/her work.
- **A rap.** Add movement or beat boxing to animate your story.
- **Slam poetry.** Think spoken word, powerful emotions, smiles, & tears.
- **A collage, a drawing or painting, a poem, sculpture, a song or piece of music, a video.**
- **You are creative, you decide!!**

### TIPS FOR MAKING A COMPELLING CREATIVE PIECE

- **Make it personal.** Why is this important to you?
- **Be real and brief.**





- **Highlight adversity.** If focusing on another person's story, highlight moments when they were tested or challenged.
- **Show why you care.** Include what you admire about a person affected by or working for your issue.
- **Be specific.**
- **Play to your strengths.** Use a creative art medium that is comfortable for you.
- **Be descriptive!** Use the descriptive power of your medium -- color, harmonies, graphics, tone of voice, vocabulary.
- **Don't tell, but show.** Don't tell about anger or truth or justice; show what made you angry, sad, happy, or committed to your subject.

*\*The storytelling suggestions are based on This I Believe in association with National Public Radio and Bird by Bird by Anne Lamott.*

### CHANGEMAKERS: Examples to view with students.

- [Robert Shetterly talks about truth and courage in a democracy](#) at the 2017 Thrivals 10.0 conference in Louisville, Kentucky (begins at 52:45)
- [Ryan Hreljac, a young water rights activist from Canada](#) talks about what he did to make a difference..
- As a teenager, [LeAlan Jones](#) galvanized a nation [about what it was like growing up in his Chicago neighborhood](#).
- [Jonathan Kozol](#) talks about the inequalities of education.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnUx39cdM5U>
- [Claudette Colvin](#) explains [why, when she was just 15, she didn't get up from her bus seat in 1951](#) in Montgomery, Alabama.
- [Diane Wilson](#) tells a group of students [what it was like when she decided to protect the bay she relied on for her livelihood](#).

### SOME OF THE AWTT CHANGEMAKERS WHO USE THE CREATIVE ARTS TO GET A RESPONSE:

<a href="#">James Baldwin</a>	Fiction writer, essayist
<a href="#">Peter Davis</a>	Filmmaker, writer
<a href="#">Ossie Davis</a>	Actor
<a href="#">James Douglass</a>	Writer
<a href="#">Ralph Ellison</a>	Novelist
<a href="#">Eve Ensler</a>	Playwright, performer



<a href="#">Denise Giardina</a>	Writer
<a href="#">Nikki Giovanni</a>	Poet
<a href="#">Woody Guthrie</a>	Folksinger, writer
<a href="#">Jim Harney</a>	Photojournalist
<a href="#">Reggie Harris</a>	Musician, storyteller
<a href="#">Kim Harris</a>	Musician, storyteller
<a href="#">Langston Hughes</a>	Poet, novelist, playwright
<a href="#">Pat Humphries</a>	Singer, songwriter
<a href="#">Zora Neale Hurston</a>	Author Folklorist
<a href="#">Becci Ingram</a>	Dramatist
<a href="#">Jonathan Kozol</a>	Writer
<a href="#">Dorothea Lange</a>	Photographer
<a href="#">Frances Moore Lappe</a>	Writer
<a href="#">Natasha Mayers</a>	Artist
<a href="#">Arthur Miller</a>	Playwright
<a href="#">Janice Mirikitani</a>	Poet
<a href="#">Sandy O</a>	Singer/songwriter
<a href="#">Bruce Utah Phillips</a>	Songwriter, storyteller, humorist
<a href="#">Michael Pollan</a>	Journalist
<a href="#">Bernice Johnson Reagon</a>	Singer, composer
<a href="#">Paul Robeson</a>	Singer, writer
<a href="#">David Rovics</a>	Singer, songwriter
<a href="#">Pete Seeger</a>	Singer, songwriter
<a href="#">Mara Sapon-Shevin</a>	Writer, singer
<a href="#">Alice Walker</a>	Novelist, essayist, poet



<a href="#">Walt Whitman</a>	Poet
<a href="#">Terry Tempest Williams</a>	Writer
<a href="#">Tilly Woodward</a>	Artist
<a href="#">Lily Yeh</a>	Artist

## SHARE SAMANTHA SMITH'S STORY WITH YOUR STUDENTS

In December 1982 during the Cold War, ten-year-old Samantha Smith of Manchester, Maine, asked her mother “who would start a war and why. [My mother] showed me a news magazine with a story about America and Russia, one that had a picture of the new Russian leader, Yuri Andropov, on the cover. We read it together. It seemed that the people in both Russia and America were worried that the other country would start a nuclear war. It all seemed so dumb to me. I had learned about the awful things that had happened during World War II, so I thought that nobody would ever want to have another war. I told Mom that she should write to Mr. Andropov to find out who was causing all the trouble. She said, ‘Why don’t you write to him?’ So I did.”

[Watch the Samantha Smith interview with Ted Koppel here.](#)

She wrote a letter to Soviet Premier Yuri Andropov asking him to, “Please tell me how you are going to help to not have war.” Andropov invited Samantha and her family to visit the Soviet Union. She agreed to go and learned something powerful from her experience that she was able to share with Russians and Americans alike: that the fear and hatred sustaining the Cold War came from the countries’ leaders, not from the countries’ people. From the one question -- “who would start a war and why?” -- a peacemaking venture unfolded that brought Russian and American students together to discover understanding and appreciation of one another, to build connections instead of armies and bombs. This eleven year old from Maine had become a teacher, telling her story to adults and children about how the world could be a more peaceful place. She said, “If we could be friends by just getting to know each other better, then what are our countries really arguing about? Nothing could be more important than not having a war if a war could kill everything.”

Sadly, in August 1985, both Samantha and her father were killed in a plane crash. But Samantha’s memory lives on in her example.

***Her progress from concern to courageous engagement began with a series of small steps and decisions—something each of us can do! That is our challenge!***



## GET INSPIRED BY PREVIOUS SSC CELEBRATIONS!

- [Senator Angus King's statement at the 1st annual SSC.](#)
- **Journal of Maine Education (2018)** features the SSC in "[The Synergy of Change: Children and Adults Inspiring Each Other.](#)" by Beth Schultz. "Imagine a classroom where children are solving real world problems, including those that stump and defy policy makers, politicians, and adults. ... In classrooms throughout Maine, students are selecting issues that resonate with them, engage in research, becoming experts, identifying reasonable and sustainable solutions, and finally sharing these solutions with others."

## TEACHER RESOURCES TO SUPPORT SSC IN THE CLASSROOM

- <http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org/news/changing-story-using-arts-advance-social-justice>
- <https://www.arteducators.org/>
- <http://worldslargestlesson.globalgoals.org/>

## SSC AND STANDARDS

The SSC is applicable to a wide range of academic standards, including the Common Core, CASEL's social and emotional literacy standards, and the 21st Century Learning Standards.

Educator Nancy Doda, PhD, compiled a list of the "Power Standards" most relevant to the SSC. [You can see her list and comments in this PDF.](#)