



# HARLEM

# New Americans Welcome Center

## THE PATH TO CITIZENSHIP

*I want to be a citizen so I can vote in federal elections. I want to participate in American life!*  
*Mariam Sangare, student.*

Amidst the arctic chill of Winter, an exciting new opportunity has emerged with vitality here at the Harlem NAWC! While citizenship classes were formerly only offered in the evening, we now have a morning citizenship class made available to our students who are on the path to being US citizens.

These classes prepare our students for the citizenship test, while we direct our students to legal services that help with the citizenship application. In 2014, five students at the Harlem Y gained citizenship, and we want to support as many of our family members as possible in this arduous but rewarding journey in the coming year.

The people who walk through our doors reflect the diversity of this world, unique to



each other in culture, lifestyle, and language, yet most share a common goal of wanting to integrate and be an active member of this thriving American society, as well as possess the skills to express themselves amidst this cultural mixing bowl of New York.

We want our students to reach their full potential as Americans. That is why we offer classes that range from basic English language literacy to high school level-education (GED); from

computer literacy to citizenship preparation. Alongside these classes, our students are encouraged to come into our New Americans office, where they can bring any difficulties they are facing to the table, and can expect confidential counseling or referrals to local organizations that offer assistance in the specific area of concern. We strongly urge anyone from the community who has questions about citizenship or immigration status in general to come in and consult with us about what the next steps should be. Whether it be direct help with applications or enrolling in our classes, we are up to the challenge of supporting as many of our students as possible in their journey to citizenship.

Our new Citizenship Preparation classes will be offered Monday through Thursday, from 10am to 1pm, and we will continue with our evening classes Tuesday and Thursday from 6pm to 9pm.

# A Bridge From Here...

## Navigating through cultures in America and beyond



From the shores of Santo Domingo to the bustling metropolis of Dakar and the tranquil deserts of Yemen, each student carries with them a world of culture, wisdom, language, and life experience that attests to the far-reaching power of diversity. One of our students, musician Joaquin Pozo explains: "We Cubans carry many cultures with us. Our roots and traditions are Senegalese, Ivorian, Congolese, Spanish, Jewish, etc... and they appear in our music and practices of Palo Mayombe and Santeria. It's incredible, but it's true."

As new Americans entering a society built by fellow immigrants and indigenous peoples, adaptation does not have to mean sacrificing the richness of culture from which our students have sojourned, but the triggering of a synopsis between the past and the present that recognizes the value of communities from which people came, and the continuation of life here in the US. Student Ibrahima Cisse accounts, "If there is something we want to keep here... it is what we had at birth. This kind of solidarity. You see, I used to live in Burkina Faso, and

over there, when there was an event like a marriage, a birth of a son or a daughter, a funeral... whether it is good news or bad news, it is for the whole society. This makes us really pay attention to each other as human beings."

As a flower transplanted to a new ecosystem is challenged to physically adapt before thriving once again, the students at New Americans engage in acculturation by reaching within for components

of themselves that have been cultivated in another time and place, in order to drive themselves forward on the concrete of America. "I think you can do whatever you want in your country and here too, for example, if you want some food from your country there are many African stores for that. We celebrate all the holidays like Ramadan, etc. And I like it here because people are very kind." Commented student Diokoanda Bathly.





# ASK YOUR NAWC

**Q:** I take classes that are ending in December. What will I do during the winter?

**A:** We have a winter session just for you! Enroll the first week of January!

**Q:** Oh no! I missed registration, now what?

**A:** Classes will continue accepting new students until they are full. Stop by in the afternoon (2-5pm) to register!

**Q:** All the classes are full... but I want to get started NOW!

**A:** Join one of our evening English Conversation Practice sessions or Afternoon study groups. Walk-ins welcome!

**Q:** You don't have the class I need right now. Can you still help me?

**A:** Yes we can! Schedule an appointment to meet with one of our case management volunteers and we'll help you search for what you're looking for.

## Thanksgiving: New Americans Style!

What do Young Money/Cash Money Records and the Harlem YMCA have in common? We love giving away turkeys! On the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, the holiday season had officially begun with community members who had come out for our annual turkey give away. Partnering with Young Money/Cash Money Records, our staff and volunteers worked hard to make Thanksgiving a little easier this year on our extended family. Many community members waited outside for several hours before the giveaway began, their dedication to their own families shining as they faced the brisk weather.

In addition to part-taking in the giveaway, students from two of our ESOL classes got together during class on Wednesday, each bringing a delicious meal from their country of origin. One student, Mamadou, brought Yassa Au Poulet – a savory chicken and onion dish from Senegal. One might not imagine Bint Es-Sakhn, a home baked

Yemeni flatbread would mix so well with Quipes, a rich breaded beef puff from the Dominican Republic,



but the combination had people coming back for seconds. This Thanksgiving, the diverse cultural chemistry of our students took form in a shared meal, with smiles and stories being shared all around.

## Students Launch New FB Page

On December 12, 2014, two students at the Harlem Y Lit Zone launched a new facebook group page with dreams that fly off the screen and into the future of a community. Ibrahima Cisse and Sekou Sacko are channeling their ambitious vision of forming an idea-sharing network of friends from around the world into this online platform, where students can take their interactions beyond the NAWC. "The idea behind the facebook page is to create a forum where people can join their different ideas and share information, where there is a connection between different countries, different realities for a better world." Ibrahima elaborates on this endeavor, which has a different approach than our official Harlem NAWC page. "This is a global vision and the first step is also to keep our

relationships, because for me the relationship is very important. We don't know what will happen to the future and the world we are living in today. We need to learn from others to improve our skills and our intellectualism: we have some goals to achieve in life!" You can join this new community by liking the page at [facebook.com/NewAmericanFriends](https://facebook.com/NewAmericanFriends)





# New York City's YMCA WE'RE HERE FOR GOOD.™

YMCA New Americans Initiative  
5 West 63rd Street; 2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10023  
(212) 875-4336  
[www.ymcanewamericans.org](http://www.ymcanewamericans.org)

## The Goals and Vision of the New Americans Welcome Centers by Dio Gica

**“The goal of the YMCA is to be recognized by every New American as a “safe haven” that provides multilingual information, resources and referrals and a wide range of services... to help them attain their goals...”**

Program Goal and Vision: The YMCA of Greater New York is committed to serving the immigrant population of the City, and, in response to their needs, has opened New Americans Welcome Centers to help immigrants achieve literacy, cultural competence, and self-sufficiency. In 2010, the YMCA will have opened Welcome Centers in areas where immigrant communities are most underserved. The Chinatown, Staten Island, Harlem, Prospect Park, and Bronx YMCAs have already served their communities through these centers. In line with its commitment to better serve the immigrant population of New York City, the YMCA of Greater New York is opening a sixth location to serve Queens, the Flushing YMCA New Americans Welcome Center. The goal of the YMCA is to be recognized by every New American as a “safe haven” that

provides multilingual information, resources and referrals and a wide range of services (instructional, vocational, recreational, and family support) that will help them attain their goals.

The YMCA recognizes the need to build capacity and develop support and networks among new immigrants. As of the 2000 census, more than 35% of City's residents are foreign-born and 43% of the City's workforce are immigrants. Nearly 70% of the total immigrant population in New York speak a language other than English. Within this group 23% do not speak English well and about 10% do not speak English at all. Most of these immigrants live in population clusters that are underserved for informational, education, recreational, vocational, advocacy and human services that the

YMCA of Greater New York is in a position to provide directly as well as in collaboration with other human service and immigrant agencies.

Program Components: The New Americans Welcome Centers serve as multilingual information resource and referral centers, and provide immigrant families with a wide array of instructional, vocational, recreational, family support, and social services. Instructional services include English as a Second Language, Cultural Orientation, Citizenship Preparation, Job Readiness, and Computer Literacy. In addition, some of our Centers offer Adult Literacy and GED preparation classes as well as Substance Abuse and Alcohol Prevention Counseling.

For more information on the YMCA New Americans Welcome Centers please access our website at [ymcanewamericans.org](http://ymcanewamericans.org).

**Bronx YMCA NAWC**  
@ Glebe Senior Center  
2125 Glebe Ave. Bronx NY 10462

Tania Alor, NAWC Program  
Coordinator [talor@ymcanyc.org](mailto:talor@ymcanyc.org)  
917-673-8688

Selenie Villar, Program Counselor  
TBD

**Chinatown YMCA NAWC**  
@ Chinatown YMCA Beacon Center  
100 Hester Street, New York, NY  
10002

Jie Ling Chen, NAWC Program  
Coordinator [jchen@ymcanyc.org](mailto:jchen@ymcanyc.org)  
212-219-8393

Wai Ling Kan, Program Counselor  
[wikan@ymcanyc.org](mailto:wikan@ymcanyc.org)  
212-219-8393

**Flushing YMCA NAWC**  
@ Flushing YMCA Branch  
138-46 Northern Blvd., Flushing, NY 11354

Michelle Lam, Program Counselor  
[mlam@ymcanyc.org](mailto:mlam@ymcanyc.org)  
718-961-6880, ext.123

Jenny Choi, Program Counselor  
[jchoi@ymcanyc.org](mailto:jchoi@ymcanyc.org)  
718-961-6880, ext. 121

**Harlem YMCA NAWC**  
@ Harlem YMCA  
180 W 135th Street, New York, NY 10030

Thalia Ma, NAWC Program Director  
[tkwok@ymcanyc.org](mailto:tkwok@ymcanyc.org) 212-912-2163

David Weinstein, Program Counselor,  
[dweinstein@ymcanyc.org](mailto:dweinstein@ymcanyc.org)  
212-912-2163

**Prospect Park YMCA NAWC**  
@ Prospect Park YMCA  
357 9th St., Brooklyn, NY 11215

Nabila Khan, NAWC Program  
Coordinator, [nkhan@ymcanyc.org](mailto:nkhan@ymcanyc.org)  
212-912-2375

Alejandro Vilar, Program Counselor  
[avilar@ymcanyc.org](mailto:avilar@ymcanyc.org)  
212-912-2378

**Staten Island YMCA NAWC**  
Staten Island YMCA Counseling Center  
285 Vanderbilt Ave., SI, NY 10304

Rachael Rinaldo, NAWC Program  
Coordinator, [rrinaldo@ymcanyc.org](mailto:rrinaldo@ymcanyc.org)  
718-981-4382, ext. 17

Regina Marks, Program Counselor,  
[rmarks@ymcanyc.org](mailto:rmarks@ymcanyc.org)  
718-981-4382, ext. 15

Darragh Murphy-Caplan  
Counselor/Ed. Case Manager  
718-981-4382 ext. 26

**ELES AIR Project**  
@ West Side YMCA  
5 West 63rd St., New York, NY  
10023

Lorna Blancaflor,  
Program Coordinator  
[lbiancaflor@ymcanyc.org](mailto:lbiancaflor@ymcanyc.org)  
212-875-4345