



**WHAT THE**

**CONSTITUTION**

**MEANS TO ME**

**BY HEIDI SCHRECK**  
DIRECTED BY ALLISON WATROUS

**PLAY GUIDE**

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Jessica Robblee as Heidi in Off Square Theatre's production (2023)

## Synopsis

*What the Constitution Means to Me* is a memoir play by actor-playwright Heidi Schreck, who, as a teenager, earned money for college by giving speeches and engaging in debates about the U.S. Constitution in American Legion halls across the country.

The play begins in a hall in Wenatchee, Washington, with Heidi telling the audience that now, as an adult, she wonders why at age 15 she loved the Constitution. So she's determined to recreate — from memory — the speech she used to give with the assistance of an everyman Legionnaire. Heidi starts to inhabit her teenage self and gives her stump speech, but eventually her 40-something self's need to comment and explain breaks through. Although it was difficult to get personal with her anecdotes and connections to the Constitution as a teen, adult Heidi digs deep to reveal how she and generations of women in her family have been personally affected by the rights and protections offered — or not offered — by the Constitution. Heidi's frank revelations and funny sidebars are warm and engaging as she takes the audience through the significance of the Ninth and Fourteenth Amendments.

In the second part of the play, elements of which are extemporaneous, Heidi takes on a high school debater over the question of whether the Constitution should be retained or abolished, with a member of the audience chosen to judge the winner. The play ends with Heidi and the debater answering questions submitted by the previous audience.

### SETTING

An American Legion hall in Wenatchee, Washington

### CHARACTERS

**Heidi**, a 40-something woman contemplating America's founding document

**Legionnaire**, a proud member of the Leyden-Chiles-Wickersham American Legion Post 10 in Wenatchee, Washington

**Debater**, a high school student who debates the merits of the Constitution with Heidi

The play includes historical audio recordings from several Supreme Court cases that feature the following voices: Justice Potter Stewart, William I. Emerson, Justice Earl Warren, Justice Antonin Scalia, John C. Eastman, Justice Stephen Breyer and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg.

*What the Constitution Means to Me* was written in 2017, premiered off-Broadway at New York Theatre Workshop in 2018 and transferred to Broadway in spring 2019. Schreck's stage performance was captured for film and began streaming on Amazon Prime Video in October 2020 ahead of the U.S. presidential election. *What the Constitution Means to Me* was a finalist for the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and received a Tony Award nomination for Best Play in 2019.

# Responses to *What the Constitution Means to Me*

**Honestly, it's one of the most exciting things I've ever seen, which explains my going back a second time. But I think the third time I went back, I realized that I was getting something out of it beyond the absolutely magnificent writing and the extraordinary production.**

And you know, I've always been a little skeptical of the notion that there's something sort of shamanistic or medicinal or restorative about theater in a kind of mysterious way, but I really felt that *What the Constitution Means to Me* was that. And every time I went back, I left feeling more hope about the survival of our democracy.

**Tony Kushner**

"What *What the Constitution Means to Me* Means to Them": Tony Kushner has a favorite new play. Heidi Schreck wrote it. They have a lot to talk about," by Sara Holden, *Vulture*, March 5, 2019.



Photo: Tony Kushner (Joan Marcus)

## Los Angeles Times

At a time when the Constitution is being assailed by those who have sworn an oath to defend it, this buoyant and often-stirring civics lesson is the theatrical curriculum Americans desperately need now. As much a play as a performance piece, *What the Constitution Means to Me* reveals with courageous poignancy the way our nation's founding legal document intersects with the choices, opportunities, relationships and destinies of those who have had to fight for their foothold in our imperfect democracy.

**Charles McNulty**

"*What the Constitution Means to Me* amended for Los Angeles, retains its power," *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2020

## The New York Times

[*What the Constitution Means to Me*] is a tragedy told as a comedy, a work of inspired protest, a slyly crafted piece of persuasion and a tangible contribution to the change it seeks. It's not just the best play to open on Broadway so far this season, but also the most important. ... *What the Constitution Means to Me* is one of the things we always say we want theater to be: an act of civic engagement. It restarts an argument many of us forgot we even needed to have.

**Jesse Green**

"Can a Play make the Constitution Great Again," *The New York Times*, March 31, 2019

## TimeOut

There's a sense of rightness — a final puzzle piece fitting into place, a key clicking into a lock — about Heidi Schreck's quasi-solo play *What the Constitution Means to Me* moving to Broadway. It has always been about rhetoric and amplifying women's voices; it's the rare indie theater piece that doesn't require intimacy. Does theater matter? Is it necessary? Sometimes our razzle-dazzled hearts aren't sure. But here is something that every citizen must see: It's theater in the old sense, the Greek sense, a place where civic society can come together and do its thinking and fixing and planning.

### Helen Shaw

"What the Constitution Means to Me: Theater Review," *Time Out New York*, March 31, 2019

## Chicago Tribune

Schreck is arguing that who the framers [of the Constitution] were, and the nature of their prejudices, is indivisible from what they wrote, whom they chose to protect and whom they did not. Constitution is not the kind of show with which the late Supreme Court justice Antonin Scalia would have agreed (although, given his love of debate, I think he would still [have] liked it). It is, at its core, an argument against any originalist interpretation of the great document and a cry for a fresh interpretation, at the very least, if not additional amendments or a whole new Constitution altogether.

### Chris Jones

"Review: *What the Constitution Means to Me* is now in Chicago," *Chicago Tribune*, March 8, 2020

## THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

Few new works for the stage are as instantly, trenchantly timely as ... *What the Constitution Means to Me*. ... It's a play of ideas for which people are not just hungry but starved. What makes it so edifying is that this isn't the kind of political theater that merely reaffirms the views of a liberal audience. It challenges us to step back and look at the bigger picture, to dwell not just on losses but also gains. And while it certainly contains elements that encourage us to engage with whatever tools we have in the struggle to keep our precarious rights and freedoms from moving backwards, its effectiveness is the result not of a call to action so much as the simple, inherently generous act of storytelling.

### David Rooney

"What the Constitution Means to Me: Theater Review," *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 31, 2019

## THE NEW YORKER

In this dire moment of cultural fragmentation, Schreck is offering an oasis of connection, a place where humanity and learning are being celebrated and protected. She is able to pull this off, in part, because the world she presents is not one of positions and stances, but of curiosity and openness. Schreck makes real the concepts that on paper seem laughable: that we each have agency to participate in the national dialogue in healthy, productive ways; that underneath the blighted soil of today's awfulness is a more dignified and still-accessible reality. Perhaps most incredibly of all, the show offers evidence that there are still reasons to have faith in the future of America. It's a gift as improbable as it is welcome. For 90 blessed minutes, the world seems sane again.

### Howard Fishman

"Heidi Schreck's Play About the U.S. Constitution Offers an Oasis of Sanity," *The New Yorker*, October 11, 2018



Photo: Heidi Schreck (Tess Mayer for *The Interval*)

## ABOUT

# Heidi Schreck

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Heidi Schreck is a writer and performer originally from Wenatchee, Washington, who now resides in Brooklyn, New York. *What the Constitution Means to Me* was named a Pulitzer Prize finalist and won the Obie Award and New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best American Play. She also received two Tony Award nominations for *What the Constitution Means to Me* (Best Play and Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play) and the 2019 Benjamin Hadley Danks Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

Her play *Grand Concourse*, which debuted at Playwrights Horizons and Steppenwolf Theatre in 2014 and 2015, won the Stacey Mindich Lilly Award in 2015 and was a finalist for the Susan Smith Blackburn Prize. Screenwriting credits include "I Love Dick," "Billions" and "Nurse Jackie." As an actor, Schreck has performed in numerous theaters around the country, including Playwrights Horizons, The Public Theater, Manhattan Theatre Club, Clubbed Thumb and Berkeley Rep.

Schreck has also taught playwriting and screenwriting at New York University, Columbia University, Kenyon College and Primary Stages. She is the recipient of three Obie Awards, a Drama Desk Award, a Theatre World Award, the Horton Foote Playwriting Award and the Hull-Warriner Award from the Dramatists Guild.

A filmed version of *What the Constitution Means to Me*, starring Schreck, premiered in October 2020 exclusively on Amazon Prime Video and was nominated for a Critics Choice Award, Producers Guild Award and Dramatists Guild Award.

# In Her Own Words

Schreck began working on [*What the Constitution Means to Me*] in 2007, when she was living in Brooklyn, and performed a brief monologue at P.S. 122, an alternative-theater space in Manhattan's East Village, about her teenage debating experiences.

"I really started from the tiny spark that so many plays start from," she told me in an interview this past September, shortly after the play closed on Broadway and was beginning a run at The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. "I certainly didn't have a grand idea."

Encouraged by the response to her initial effort, she set about expanding the piece. It was when she posed herself the challenge that her 15-year-old self was given during those contests — find a personal connection between her life and the Constitution — that the work grew into a kind of feminist deconstruction of the nation's founding document. ...

*What the Constitution Means* "sort of took its own shape," she said. "I felt as if the play led me." Schreck, who was briefly on a prelaw track in college before English and theater swept her away, turned herself into something of a constitutional expert, taking a deep dive into the mindset of the men who wrote the

Constitution, who was left out of it and how it has been shaped over time. In the play, she talks quite a bit about the Ninth Amendment, which says simply, "The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people." Or, as she puts it onstage, the Constitution doesn't guarantee you the right to brush your teeth, but that doesn't mean you don't have that right. (The Ninth Amendment has helped secure, for instance, the right to use birth control.)

She enlarges, too, on the concept of negative rights versus positive rights — things that the government is expressly forbidden to infringe upon versus things that are proactively guaranteed. She studied up on the constitutions of other nations that have a greater emphasis on positive rights than does the U.S. Constitution. South Africa, for instance, guarantees the right to human dignity and to a healthy environment.

## Heidi Schreck, in an interview with Neil Genzlinger

"Heidi Schreck's Riveting Play Deconstructs the U.S. Constitution," *Smithsonian Magazine*, as part of the Smithsonian's Ingenuity Awards, December 2019

People only vote to abolish [the Constitution] 20 percent of the time. We keep a little tally backstage. But around the Kavanaugh hearings — that was when we got the most abolishers, actually, and I think it was because ... well, because it was being shoved right in our faces, the fact that things are not working structurally. The idea of this document being created by white men for white men was so vivid in those days, and I think there was a willingness in people to say, "Yeah, let's chuck it and start over." And that was exciting for me. I personally love it when people vote to abolish. It makes my play feel so much more radical! Somebody actually said to me, "Your play's really radical when people abolish the Constitution, and it feels less radical when they don't. So don't you want to try to control that in some way?" And I was like, "The whole point of the play is that I don't control it." It's a civic act. We decide as a community how to move forward. So I don't get to decide whether it's more or less radical at the end.

## Heidi Schreck

"What *What the Constitution Means to Me* Means to Them": Tony Kushner has a favorite new play. Heidi Schreck wrote it. They have a lot to talk about," by Sara Holden, *Vulture*, March 5, 2019

# The Constitution of the United States of America

By Carla Steen  
Resident Dramaturg,  
Guthrie Theater

**“We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.”** – Preamble to the Constitution

During the summer of 1787, four years after the end of the Revolutionary War, 55 men gathered in what is now called Independence Hall in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Their task, as seen in retrospect, was to craft a constitution to define the powers, duties and laws of the U.S. federal government and guarantee certain rights to its people. Since 1781, the law of the land had been defined by the Articles of Confederation, and the Philadelphia convention was initially sanctioned by the Continental Congress to revise the Articles. Some delegates went into the Philadelphia meeting with grander ideas than others about what their work could achieve, and it wasn't long before the group realized they needed — and were in fact working to create — an entirely new document.

The issues debated and argued into the wee hours for weeks on end are now legendary, and their legacies are still present today: slavery, states' rights and proportional versus equal representation to a federal government by states of varying sizes. Not every state sent delegates (ahem, Rhode Island, called “Rogue Island” in Boston), and not every delegate was there for the entirety of the convention's four months. But as imperfect and full of compromise as the result of that summer's work was, the Constitution of the United States of America was a remarkable document that greatly improved on the Articles.

The Constitution was signed by 39 of the delegates, it was ratified by the required nine states in June 1788 and the new government began operations in March 1789. The Constitution itself provides for the circumstances under which it can be amended. An amendment may be proposed by Congress and submitted to the states if it is approved by two-thirds of both houses of Congress. Or, if two-thirds of state legislatures propose a convention to amend the Constitution, Congress must call that convention. Either way, an approved amendment needs to be ratified by three-fourths of state legislatures to take effect.

The first 10 amendments, called the Bill of Rights, were proposed by Congress in September 1789 and certified in December 1791. The Constitution has been amended 27 times; the most recent amendment was ratified in May 1992. (Fun fact: The Twenty-Seventh Amendment about congressional pay was originally among those proposed to be part of the Bill of Rights, but it didn't receive enough support to be ratified in 1791. Before the 20th century, there was no time limit placed on the ratification of amendments.)

Heidi Schreck's *What the Constitution Means to Me* focuses particularly on the Ninth Amendment, part of the Bill of Rights, and the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified after the Civil War.



## NINTH AMENDMENT: NON-ENUMERATED RIGHTS RETAINED BY PEOPLE

Ratified and certified in 1791

### NINTH AMENDMENT

“The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.”

The Ninth Amendment was essentially a compromise between those who supported a Bill of Rights and those who felt it was unnecessary. Supporters of a Bill of Rights wanted to ensure that certain individual rights received constitutional protection, limiting the federal government’s power over those rights. Opponents of a Bill of Rights said it would be impossible to list all rights and that delineating only some rights would suggest that any rights not expressly noted were not protected. Thus, the text of the Ninth Amendment makes clear this latter point: Just because rights are not enumerated explicitly in the Constitution does not mean they are denied to the people.

**“[T]he Ninth Amendment shows a belief of the Constitution’s authors that fundamental rights exist that are not expressly enumerated in the first eight amendments and an intent that the list of rights included there not be deemed exhaustive.”**

**Justice Arthur Goldberg**

sharing his opinion regarding *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 1965

The Ninth Amendment hasn’t often been the basis for Supreme Court decisions, but when it has, it often centers on issues of privacy, such as marital privacy and contraception in *Griswold v. Connecticut* (1965). The Ninth Amendment has also been criticized for being so vague that it is unhelpful in identifying and affirming which rights should be included in its protection.

#### For more information read:

“Common Interpretation: The Ninth Amendment” by Randy E. Barnett and Louis Michael Seidman for the National Constitution Center. [www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-ix/interps/131](http://www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-ix/interps/131)

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## FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT (SECTION 1) CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS, EQUAL PROTECTION

Ratified and certified in 1868

### FOURTEENTH AMENDMENT

“All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

The primary purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment was to protect the citizenship rights of formerly enslaved people. One of three amendments that were passed in the wake of the Civil War, the Fourteenth Amendment has five sections, and the first section is of interest to Schreck. Section 1 of the Fourteenth Amendment defines who is a citizen of the U.S. and protects the equal rights and privileges of citizens and their right to due process. The most significant and immediate effect of this amendment was to overturn the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857 that declared freed slaves born within a state or nation were not entitled to citizenship. This Fourteenth Amendment ensured and protected citizenship and its rights to all former slaves in the U.S. by declaring that all persons born or naturalized in the U.S. are citizens.

The Fourteenth Amendment is one of the most frequently cited amendments in litigation and has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to affirm the citizenship of any child born in the U.S., regardless of the citizenship status of their parents; that citizens cannot be artificial people and a corporate body is not a citizen; that separate is not equal under the equal protection clause; to affirm a woman’s right to an abortion; and to affirm the right to same-sex marriage.

#### For more information read:

“Common Interpretation: The Citizenship Clause” by Akhil Reed Amar and John C. Harrison for the National Constitution Center. [www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-xiv/clauses/700](http://www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-xiv/clauses/700)

“Common Interpretation: The Equal Protection Clause” by Brian T. Fitzpatrick and Theodore M. Shaw for the National Constitution Center. [www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-xiv/clauses/702](http://www.constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/interpretation/amendment-xiv/clauses/702)

# Glossary of Terms

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**American Legion** (*proper noun*) — An organization founded in 1919 that is composed of ex-servicemen from the U.S. Armed Forces who saw active duty during wartime. The Legion assists and lobbies politically for veterans in addition to sponsoring various youth programs.

**associative logic** (*noun*) — A method of thinking in which a person draws connections between topics that seem unrelated or distantly related.

**changeling** (*noun*) — A fairy child whom fairies secretly leave in the place of a human child they have abducted. From European folklore.

**clause** (*noun*) — A separate, distinct section of a legal document, such as a will, contract or treaty.

**extemporaneous** (*adjective*) — Spoken or performed with little or no advance preparation.

**Hammurabi** (*proper noun*) — An ancient king of Babylonia (in present-day Iraq). He established a law code that implemented severe physical punishments and harsher laws for poor citizens and women. The saying “An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth” comes from Hammurabi’s laws.

**jurisdiction** (*noun*) — The extent of authority or control that a governing body or official has. For example, someone’s jurisdiction may be limited to certain topics or geographical areas.

**Legion Hall** (*proper noun*) — A meeting place for members of the American Legion, specific to a town or other small geographical location. Legion Halls often host events for their members, youth and the wider community.

**Magna Carta** (*proper noun*) — A legal document drafted by English noblemen in 1215. This document, which they forced King John to sign, established the right of the noblemen to swift trials and protected them from illegal imprisonment. The Constitution as a whole, and specifically the Fifth Amendment, was inspired by the Magna Carta and its role in establishing rights for English citizens.

**melancholia** (*noun*) — An outdated term for a mental health condition. Symptoms were said to be severe depression and an irrational sense of fear or foreboding.

**milliner** (*noun*) — A person who designs, makes or sells hats for women.

**naturalistic** (*adjective*) — In art, when something is an accurate, detailed and unbiased re-creation of life. Naturalistic art does not have supernatural or unrealistic elements and strives to depict objective reality, not the opinions of the artist.

**pager** — A small, portable device that can receive text or voice messages. Some pagers can also reply to or send messages. Pagers were commonly carried before mobile phones became widespread, and they are still used today by people working in emergency services or public safety.

**penumbra** (*noun*) — A shadowy, indefinite or incompletely illuminated area.

**trenchant** — Incisive, keen or cutting. Sharp, direct and to the point.

# Theme Snapshot

## Rights and the U.S. Constitution

**What the Constitution Means to Me explores the strengths and limitations of the U.S. Constitution. The Constitution was written to protect the rights of landowning white men in the U.S, and over time, it has been amended to extend more of those rights to more people in the country. The U.S. has succeeded in extending equal rights to people in some ways, but it has also failed.**

People who have not been protected by the Constitution, or who have been discriminated against by the U.S. government, have had to ask: How can I fight to be treated fairly? Can a government that has discriminated against people become more just? We continue to ask similar questions about ourselves and our role in our democracy.

- Are rights given to people by governments, or do all people inherently have rights?
- Should the Constitution attempt to recognize all of those rights?

The play asks us to consider whether we should change the Constitution moving forward, and, if so, how we should do it.

- Should we keep the Constitution as the basis of our government or try to write a new and fairer document for today's society?
- If we keep the Constitution, how should we continue to change it?
- How can we achieve a more participatory and fairer representative democracy?

Throughout the play, Heidi investigates how her life and the lives of her family members have been impacted by the Constitution. She examines how her access to reproductive health care, including birth control and abortion, influenced her career and adulthood. Today, people all over the country can access reproductive health procedures and use various forms of contraception, but not everyone who needs or wants this health care can obtain it. For many, the ability to see doctors, have medical procedures or use different kinds of birth control is limited by a lack of health insurance, lack of available doctors, geography or other reasons. Laws and policies governing reproductive health care continue to change, and these changes have influenced Heidi's relationships with other women in her family.

- How does the ability (or inability) to obtain reproductive health care affect the life decisions of people who can get pregnant?
- How might a person's identities and life circumstances (such as race, economic background, ability status, sexuality, gender identity and geographical location) affect the reproductive health care options available to them?
- How have generational differences played a role in conversations you've had or witnessed with family members about reproductive health care?

The domestic abuse of women by men who are their partners, family members or otherwise important people in their lives has also played a role in Heidi's life and family history. Domestic violence primarily affects women, and she connects it to other ways women have historically been devalued in the U.S. Domestic violence often remains hidden, and even when it is reported, it can be difficult for women and their families to find safety from an abuser. In *What the Constitution Means to Me*, Heidi explains how the Constitution has failed to protect victims of domestic violence.

- How are women who are victims of domestic violence treated differently by law enforcement, social services and society based on their identities and life circumstances?
- How are the ways we think about, discuss and react to domestic violence different from the ways we think about, discuss and react to other kinds of violence?
- How can we ensure the rights of women who are victims of domestic violence are protected?

# Fault Lines in the Constitution: A Community Conversation

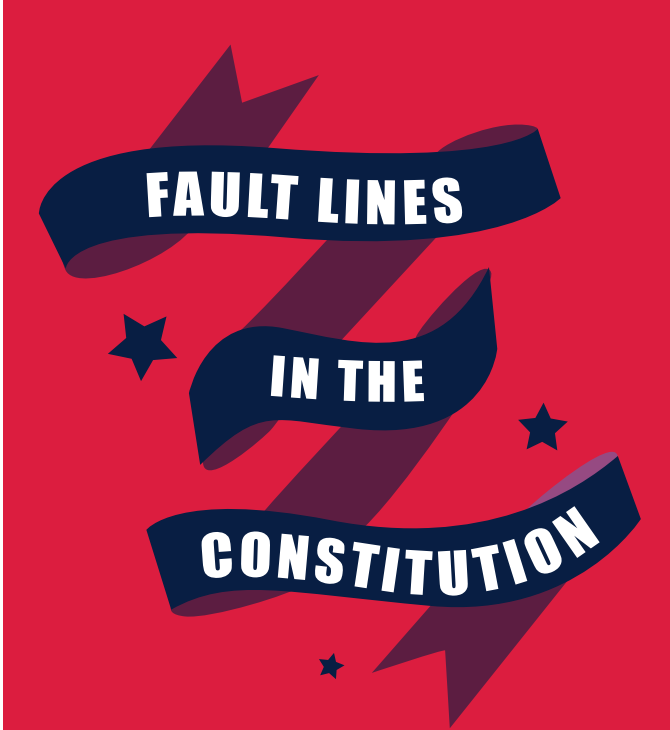
**“The Constitution is a living document. That is what is so beautiful about it. It is a living, warm-blooded, steamy document. It is not a patchwork quilt. It is hot and sweaty. It is a crucible.”**

Heidi in *What the Constitution Means to Me*

In realizing our vision of theatre as a catalyst for connection, Off Square Theatre is partnering with Wyoming Humanities to host authors Cynthia Levinson and Sanford Levinson for a Community Conversation inspired by their book – *Fault Lines In the Constitution: The Framers, Their Fights, and the Flaws that Affect Us Today*. This book was used by playwright Heidi Schreck as she was developing *What the Constitution Means to Me*. The Levinsons will visit 4 area schools, host a workshop discussion at the Teton County Library, and wrap-up their visit with a lively community conversation in Jackson and livestreamed to satellite locations around the state. Free copies of the book are available at the Teton County Library and through the partnering satellite locations.

The Levinsons’ visit and the community book giveaway are made possible in part by additional support from the Wonder Institute, the Center for the Book, Almost Authors, and the Teton County Library Foundation.

Stay engaged at [faultlinesintheconstitution.com](http://faultlinesintheconstitution.com)



**Join this presentation and activate democracy with your community on May 16 at 6:30pm at one of the following locations:**

Teton County, Off Square Theatre at the Center for the Arts

Sheridan High School, We The People

Goshen County Library

Campbell County Public Library

Natrona County Library

# 18 Ways Youth Under 18 Can Contribute to Elections

Learn More at  
[circle.tufts.edu/circlegrowingvoters](https://circle.tufts.edu/circlegrowingvoters)

## From the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement at Tufts University

Underage youth may not be able to vote in the general election, but their voices and actions can be a vital part of the political process. Being under 18 years old may mean that you cannot vote in the general election, but it doesn't mean that young people cannot contribute to political engagement and to conversations about what's important in an election year.

Beyond voting, whether in local, state, or national elections, there are countless ways for young people under 18 to participate in democracy. These contributions can occur in a range of settings and have a wide-reaching influence. These ways of engaging are steps on a path to growing as a future voter and to help grow voters in your community.

Here are 18 ways that youth under 18 can participate. We know there are more; explore what you and your peers can do in your community!

### Support Your Family & Friends' Participation

- Ask your friends and family if they are eligible and registered to vote, and if necessary, bring them information to help them register. If they're not eligible, ask them how they are going to participate
- Help friends and family find reliable information about the election, the candidates, and important issues that they care about
- Watch and discuss a local or national debate/forum with your family and friends
- Organize or support conversations at school about elections and voting
- Bring the Teaching for Democracy Alliance checklist or commitment to school leaders and work with them to make a plan to support student learning (find at [teachingfordemocracy.org](https://teachingfordemocracy.org))

### Uplift Stories & Issues You Care About

- Do research on an issue/policy you're interested in to find reliable information on the candidates' stance on the issue, and then share your viewpoint with those who can vote
- Factcheck your research and then create media (e.g. images, videos, music) about candidates or issues you're interested in and share them with others
- Evaluate a range of news media coverage of the issues and candidates to understand how journalists are covering the election
- Contact local media outlets about the issues you care about and offer to share your opinions and insights

- Create media about the people and issues in a community that has few local media outlets or that you think hasn't been portrayed accurately in election coverage
- Tell stories about how youth of all ages—especially those from communities of color—are engaging in the election and share it with news organizations and social media so that a wider diversity of young people are better represented

### Support a Candidate's Campaign

- Volunteer on a local, state, or national political campaign
- Attend a campaign event with a family member
- Talk to those who are eligible to vote about your preferred candidates, what they stand for, and why it matters to you

### Be a Part of the Process

- Find out if you can work at the polls on Election Day—many states allow 16- and 17-year-olds to do it!
- Work with a local organization that is registering others to vote
- Design posters with key information about how, when and where to vote, and put them up at school and in your community
- Send your friends and family reminders of when and where to vote on Election Day—even drive them if they need a ride!

# For Further Reading and Understanding

## BOOKS

**What the Constitution Means to Me** by Heidi Schreck, acting edition, published by Concord Theatricals.

**What the Constitution Means to Me** by Heidi Schreck, published by Theatre Communications Group.

**Grand Concourse by Heidi Schreck, acting edition**, published by Concord Theatricals.

**Creature** by Heidi Schreck, acting edition, published by Concord Theatricals.

**The Consultant** by Heidi Schreck, acting edition, published by Concord Theatricals.

**Miracle at Philadelphia: The Story of the Constitutional Convention, May to September 1787** by Catherine Drinker Bowen, published by Little, Brown and Company, 1966.

## ARTICLES

**Genzlinger, Neil**, "Heidi Schreck's Riveting Play Deconstructs the U.S. Constitution," *Smithsonian Magazine*, as part of the Smithsonian's Ingenuity Awards, December 2019. [www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/heidi-schreck-riveting-play-deconstructs-us-constitution-180973500/](http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/heidi-schreck-riveting-play-deconstructs-us-constitution-180973500/)

**Holden, Sara**, "What What the Constitution Means to Me Means to Them": Tony Kushner has a favorite new play. Heidi Schreck wrote it. They have a lot to talk about," *Vulture*, March 5, 2019. [www.vulture.com/2019/03/heidi-schreck-tony-kushner-what-the-constitution-means-to-me.html](http://www.vulture.com/2019/03/heidi-schreck-tony-kushner-what-the-constitution-means-to-me.html)

**Weinert-Kendt, Rob**, "A Set as 'Intense' as the Stories the Constitution Tells," *The New York Times*, April 24, 2019. [www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/theater/what-the-constitution-means-to-me-set.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/24/theater/what-the-constitution-means-to-me-set.html)

## VIDEOS

**"What the Constitution Means to Me,"** a filmed version of the play on Amazon Prime Video, October 15, 2020. [www.amazon.com/What-Constitution-Means-Me/dp/B08KRB3FQ4](http://www.amazon.com/What-Constitution-Means-Me/dp/B08KRB3FQ4)

**Heidi Schreck on What the Constitution Means to Me,** PBS, May 10, 2019. [www.pbs.org/video/heidi-schreck-what-constitution-means-me-osptfk/](http://www.pbs.org/video/heidi-schreck-what-constitution-means-me-osptfk/)

## RADIO

**"Heidi Schreck: Kids Read the Constitution,"** as heard on Ask Me Another, National Public Radio, October 23, 2020. [www.npr.org/2020/10/23/926633594/heidi-schreck-kids-read](http://www.npr.org/2020/10/23/926633594/heidi-schreck-kids-read)

## ESSAYS

**"Twin Cities law professors on the US Constitution: about this series,"** Pioneer Press, September 20, 2021. A series of explanatory columns from a collaboration between the St. Paul Pioneer Press, professors at Mitchell Hamline School of Law and students in St. Paul Public Schools. [www.twincities.com/2021/09/19/twin-cities-law-professors-on-the-us-constitution-about-this-series/](http://www.twincities.com/2021/09/19/twin-cities-law-professors-on-the-us-constitution-about-this-series/)

**"We the People,"** *The New York Times*, August 4, 2021. [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/08/04/opinion/us-constitution-amendments.html](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/08/04/opinion/us-constitution-amendments.html)

## STUDY GUIDE

**New York Theatre Workshop's The Brief**, for its production of *What the Constitution Means to Me*, September 2018. <https://view.publitas.com/new-york-theatre-workshop/what-the-constitution-means-to-me-study-guide/>

## WEBSITES

**www.constitutioncenter.org**  
Located in Philadelphia, the National Constitution Center is the country's leading platform for Constitution education and debate.

**www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/curriculum/what-constitution-means-me**  
A curated history of the Constitution by The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History based on historical moments discussed in the play.

**www.constitutionfacts.com**  
Online hub for all things related to the Constitution, including full texts, quizzes and more.

**www.constitution.congress.gov**  
A government-sanctioned record of interpretation of the Constitution regularly updated and written in "plain English." Useful for all audiences, it is maintained by the Library of Congress and Congressional Research Service.

**www.oconnorinstitute.org/constitution-series**  
A free online public forum and webcast series about the Constitution curated by the Sandra Day O'Connor Institute for American Democracy.

**www.constitutionbroadway.com**  
Official website of the national tour of *What the Constitution*