



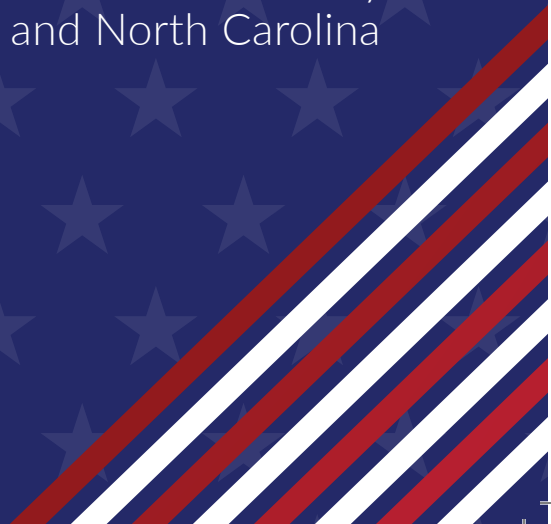
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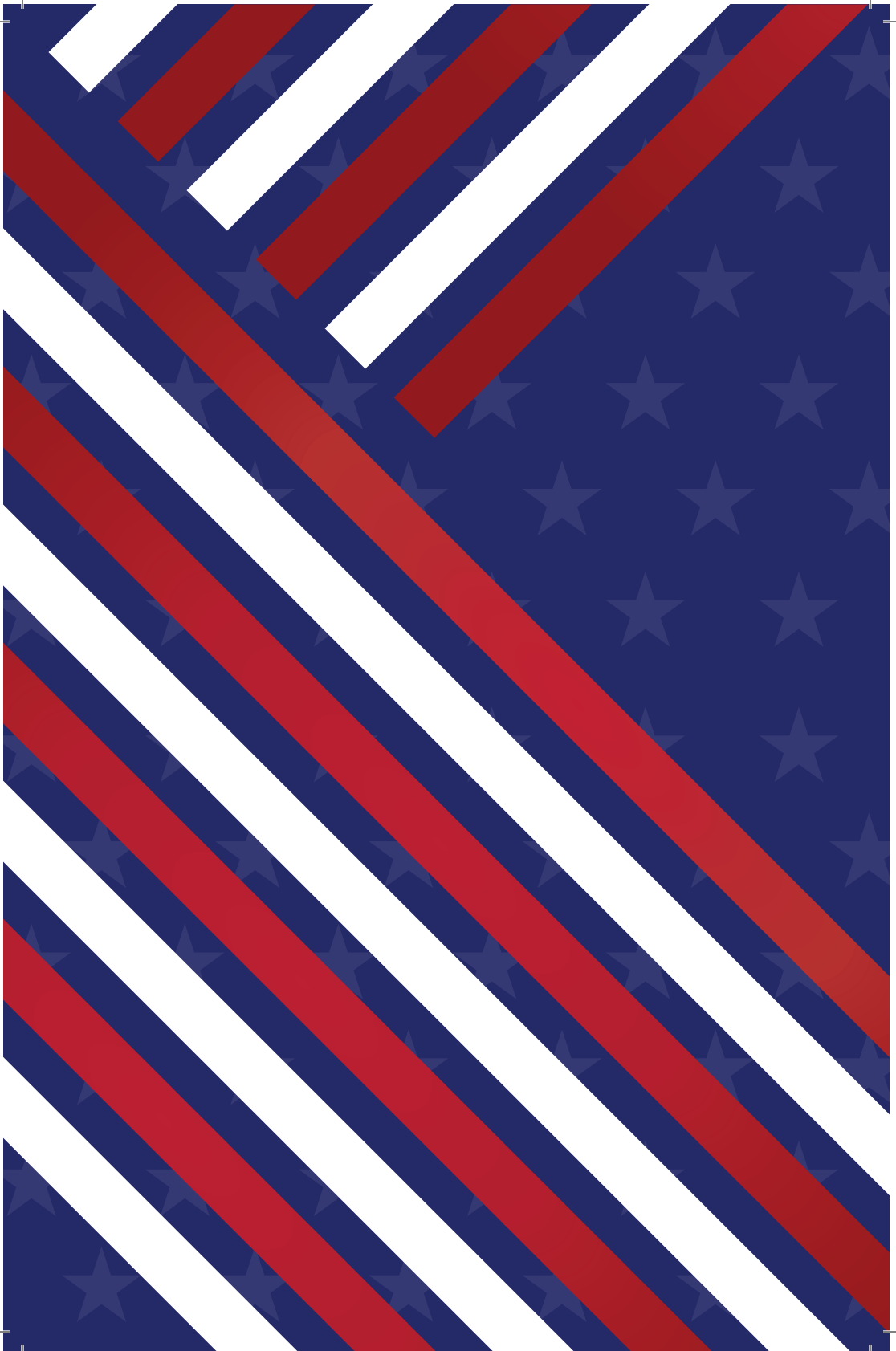
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NC

To be rather than to seem

Planning Guide for the 250th Anniversary
of the United States and North Carolina



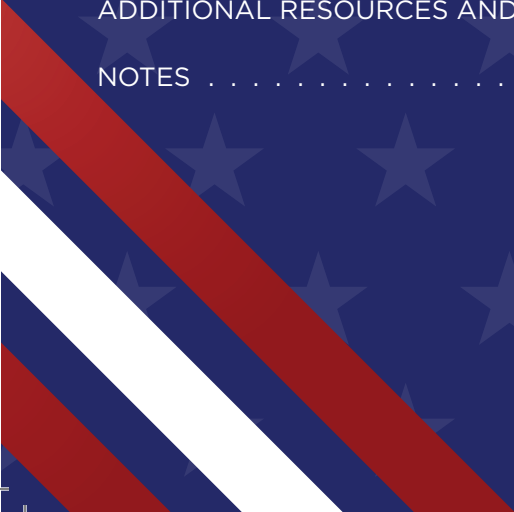


HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Refer to this guide when planning thematic events, to access educational materials, for branding guidance, or to understand our celebration. This document will be expanded periodically, so be sure to check for updates on our [website](#).

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OUR GOAL AND OUR GRATITUDE



NC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

THE NC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES IS A CABINET-LEVEL STATE AGENCY THAT OVERSEES 27 HISTORIC SITES, SEVEN HISTORY MUSEUMS, TWO ART MUSEUMS, FIVE SCIENCE MUSEUMS, THREE AQUARIUMS, 41 STATE PARKS, THE ZOO, THE SYMPHONY, THE STATE LIBRARY, THE STATE ARCHIVES, THE ARTS COUNCIL, THE STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE, THE OFFICE OF STATE ARCHAEOLOGY, THE AMERICAN INDIAN HERITAGE COMMISSION, AND THE AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE COMMISSION. ALL DIVISIONS OF THE AGENCY WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE 250TH COMMEMORATION.

OUR GOAL AND OUR GRATITUDE

The 250th anniversary of the United States offers us a unique opportunity to reflect on how far we have come as a country, and to consider the ongoing work of our democracy. In preparing for this commemoration, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources seeks to generate a spirit of collaboration across departments, municipalities, and civic organizations.

It is our hope that these networks will sustain pride in our state's history, its residents, and our collective responsibilities to democracy. We are grateful for the continued participation of official entities but also of the public at large, whose engagement with this commemoration is integral to its success.



A VISION FOR THE SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

WELCOME TO AMERICA 250 NC!

In 2026, America will commemorate 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the development of a new country dedicated to “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” In the years since, our country has undergone many changes, and faced many challenges.

To observe this momentous occasion, the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission was established by Congress ([P.L. 114-196](#)) to encourage Americans to remember our past, celebrate the present, and look forward to a promising future. America250 NC is North Carolina’s commemoration of the 250th anniversary of our state in the development of the United States.

The North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources is the statewide entity charged by Governor Cooper with the leadership of the commemoration for North Carolina. To this end, DNCR is connecting with a variety of local, state, and federal partners to accomplish the goals of this commemoration. Each provides a unique viewpoint and approach to commemorating this anniversary.

As we prepare to mark this anniversary, we are focused on lifting the voices (both historical and present) of North Carolinians to present a more complete narrative of our state’s role in our country. To this end, we are happy to introduce the America 250 NC planning guide. In it you will find our guiding themes and goals, suggestions on how you can engage with the anniversary, and additional resources.

North Carolina will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Revolution with wide ranging activities across a multi-year commemoration beginning on April 12, 2024, with a focus on 2026. Additional events will continue through 2033 to reflect our state’s Revolutionary history. Our activities will include educa-

A VISION FOR THE SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

tional outreach, online resources related to our Revolutionary history, exhibits across the state, and a wide variety of commemorative events. The activities listed here are subject to change and additional programs and products may be added as the commemoration grows. The commemoration's goal is to empower North Carolinians to engage with 250 years of our rich, diverse history.

COMMEMORATIVE THEMES

As we prepare to commemorate this important anniversary, a cross-disciplinary group of academics, public historians, and educators identified interpretive themes that will guide our approach to developing events and outreach. These themes inform how we at DNCR are sourcing and developing content that will define the statewide commemoration. We encourage you to refer to these as inspiration in planning your local activities.

The commemoration will focus on two broad concepts with complementary thematic avenues to explore these concepts: **REVOLUTIONARY NC** (the historical events of the Revolution and NC) and **WHEN ARE WE US?** (an exploration of the ideas of freedom, civic responsibility, overcoming challenges, and change as we lean into the ideals of democracy). The following themes are helpful in exploring these concepts in a variety of ways.

VISIONS OF FREEDOM

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION WAS A BEGINNING OF A CONTINUAL JOURNEY FOR NORTH CAROLINIANS TO SEEK TRUE FREEDOM.

The American Revolution was an important marker on the continual journey towards true freedom for North Carolinians. This theme is a good place to identify political, military, or social Revolutionary era leaders who took bold steps to stand up to British rule. Here we will also highlight movements that pushed us closer to a better version of our state and nation – the Civil Rights Movement, Women's Suffrage, even scientific and industrial developments – have all shaped who and what we are as North Carolinians striving for the promises of 1776.

A VISION FOR THE SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

GATHERING OF VOICES

NORTH CAROLINA'S MANY VOICES INSPIRE FUTURE GENERATIONS TO CREATE AND LEAD.

This commemoration cannot be told through a single lived experience. The historic and modern-day voices and stories of North Carolinians serve to inspire others to take innovative steps towards a "More Perfect Union," and to ensure that all voices are heard. Our Revolutionary ancestors have much to tell us about their lives and experiences. Voices from our recent past can also inspire us to recognize that "out of many, one" voice can be heard, can make change, and can affect us all.

COMMON GROUND

PLACES CARRY OUR STORIES OF STRUGGLE, CREATION, AND CONNECTION TO ONE ANOTHER.

We must recognize that we are students, witnesses, and makers of history. Physical spaces hold shared stories of struggle, creation, and connection and our spaces of reverence (battlefields, historic spaces, the natural world) can echo happiness, violence, painful memories, evidence of struggles, rebirth, and growth. All hold the narratives of collective and individual struggle, creativity, and relationships to one another. We must always strive for common ground and ways to make our state a better place.

THEMES

VISIONS OF FREEDOM	GATHERING OF VOICES	COMMON GROUND
The American Revolution was a beginning of a continual journey for North Carolinians to seek true freedom.	North Carolina's many voices inspire future generations to create and lead.	Places carry our stories of struggle, creation, and connection to one another.

ENGAGING WITH AMERICA 250 NC THEMES

Commemorative activities will empower North Carolinians to consider what the concepts set forth in the Declaration of Independence mean both historically and for modern day residents.

WHEN ARE WE US? and **REVOLUTIONARY NC** are chosen to represent North Carolina's journey from the beginning of an experiment in democracy to the present. When planning thematic activities, it will be helpful to refer to the themes and topics listed below with more details, as well as some examples of events, exhibits, and topics that can be used around each theme.

When planning events, we encourage partners to align activities with our themes. Here are some examples of where certain topics might fall. Of course, it is possible that one topic may cross themes. For example, when examining protests, marches, and demonstrations for voting rights, you may consider the theme of **VISIONS OF FREEDOM**, as well as **COMMON GROUND**.

Programming can help audiences consider their community's role in the founding of the United States, and their continued place in its history. Many **REVOLUTIONARY NC** concepts can cross multiple themes as well. For example, John Chavis, a free person of color, enlisted and fought as a Revolutionary War patriot soldier (**REVOLUTIONARY NC**) and later established a school in Raleigh (**WHEN ARE WE US?**).

A GATHERING OF VOICES

- »Immigration
- »Women/families/children
- »Regulators
- »Westward expansion
- »Protest/Counter-protest
- »American Indian experience
- »Latinx experience
- »Black experience
- »LGBTQ+ experience
- »Disability experience



VISIONS OF FREEDOM

- »Reconstruction
- »Halifax resolves
- »American Indian rights
- »Civil Rights movement
- »LGBTQ+ rights
- »Labor and labor movements
- »Disability and accessibility movement



COMMON GROUND

- »Development of State Parks
- »Naturalization
- »Voting rights
- »Draft/military service
- »Agriculture

EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

The America 250 NC team will be developing exhibits and displays related to this celebration. While these will be on a large scale, it might be helpful to refer to these examples when developing your own programming.

EXHIBIT FORMATS AND EXAMPLES

MAJOR EXHIBITS

The NC Museum of History and affiliate museums will mount exhibitions to examine moments across 250 years that define the unique experiences of North Carolinians.

TRAVELING EXHIBITS

Non-artifact based and designed to be flexible in setup and configuration for a variety of locations.

ONE-DAY WONDERS

The State Archives will develop a special, pop-up exhibit featuring original documents from their collections.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH AND RESOURCES

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

TEACHER RESOURCES

Before and during the commemoration of the 250th, DNCR will create curriculum materials and sponsor teacher workshops on “REVOLUTIONARY NORTH CAROLINA,” and “WHEN ARE WE US?,” and associated themes. DNCR staff will contribute expertise, historic locations, and digital materials associated with their collections to the program.

EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

Educational materials will be made widely available free of charge. Additional materials will feature discussions of civil discourse and basic civics education.

TAR HEEL JUNIOR HISTORIAN

The statewide history club for students managed by the North Carolina Museum of History will highlight content related to the themes across the commemorative time period.

ANCHOR

[\(A North Carolina History Online Resource\)](#) The online resource will grow with additional materials that support commemorative themes through digital imagery of artifact, library, and archival materials from across the department accompanied by interpretive essays, including downloadable documents kits with suggested classroom activities.

ARCHAEOLOGY DAYS

The Office of State Archaeology will sponsor public excavation events at various state historic sites (i.e., Halifax, Edenton, Brunswick Town, Tryon Palace, etc.) with coordinated student involvement.

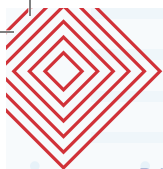
ONLINE AND OTHER RESOURCES

CENTRAL COORDINATING WEBSITE

A new commemorative web portal will contain: an online joint calendar of commemorative activities; updated Timeline of the Revolution; centralized access to other DNCR offerings such as [ANCHOR](#), [NCPedia](#); online exhibits.

“REVOLUTIONARY NC TRAILS.”

Development of a online resource to include battlefields and other places of interest along with suggested itineraries.



EDUCATIONAL AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

DIGITIZATION OF MATERIALS

DNCR entities will digitize and provide greater access to collections along commemorative themes to emphasize the underrepresented stories of the period, genealogical value, and support of the K-12 curriculum.

PODCASTS/BLOG/NEWSLETTER

A series will feature DNCR and partner locations on topics related to the wide spectrum of commemorative topics and develop behind-the-scenes podcasts to share our preparations for the 250th as well as “what we are finding” as we do the preliminary research to plan the 250th.

ONLINE CLASS(ES) AND EVENTS

Online learning opportunities for adult learners on topics such as “Finding Revolutionary Ancestry,” trivia contests, and other topics such as civic engagement.

VIDEO RESOURCES

Short films on commemorative themes.

PUBLICATIONS

Special issues of Tar Heel Junior Historian (Museum of History); the North Carolina Historical Review (Office of Historical Research); Image and essay book on NC in the Revolution; a children’s book series; revival of appropriate out-of-print Revolutionary titles in electronic and print-on-demand formats.

SPEAKERS BUREAU

Historians, curators, archivists, historical interpreters from across the Office of Archives and History will develop presentations on various Revolutionary-era topics.



WHAT SHOULD I DO? PROGRAMMING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Are you wondering how you can mark this important date in your own community? Here are some suggestions:

COMMEMORATE IMPORTANT NATIONAL AND LOCAL EVENTS.

- » Plan a reading of the Declaration of Independence in your community on July 4, 2026.
- » Work with your local organizations to identify and highlight important events and people in your community.

EMBRACE THE ARTS WITH YOUR LOCAL ARTS COUNCIL

- » Musical performances, theater, and artist exhibitions by artists young and old can share a spirit of pride in your community and its history.
- » Community Storytelling with local storytellers can entertain and educate even as they encourage community elders to share their history through oral history projects.
- » Hold a film screening. Consider screening a film related to one of the topics mentioned. Develop questions to engage the audience in viewing

EMBRACE LITERACY WITH YOUR LOCAL LIBRARY

- » Start a book club and meet weekly to discuss topics related to the revolutionary war, civil rights, colonial food, and many more!

PROGRAMMING IN YOUR COMMUNITY

EMBRACE HISTORY WITH HISTORY-MINDED PROGRAMS

- » Host a lecture series by inviting experts on NC history to speak on their work at a local library or school. If COVID protocols are necessary, local parks are also fine places to gather and learn.
- » Host a traveling exhibit from DNCR. Non-artifact exhibits will be available to travel to a variety of locations across the state will be available on our website. Consider adding local content to the exhibit.
- » Augment an existing festival or annual event by adding America 250 NC themes, activities, and costumed living historians to an annual event to highlight the commemoration without planning an entire new event.

SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- » Whatever you decide to do, share it! Use **#America250NC** to tag us in your celebrations and learning experiences and we will share on our platform. Also consider making Facebook groups to build community around topics and experiences.



KEEPING UP TO DATE WITH AMERICA 250 NC

While we encourage you to consider developing events and educational programs to align with the celebration, there are several low-input possibilities for making your voice and impact heard. To keep up to date on our plans for the celebration, visit America250nc.com.

NEWSLETTER

Our newsletter is the quickest and most effective way to learn about our progress and plans. This is where you will find updates on our themes, our events, and our planning across the state. You can sign up on our website [here](#).

SOCIAL MEDIA

As we ramp up our activities, we will be sharing across [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#). We encourage you to follow us and share with your networks.

EVENT SUBMISSION

Planning an event? Submitting to the America 250 NC calendar is easy! Fill out [this form](#) for consideration. Be sure to check the content and type of event against our themes to be sure it is relevant to the commemoration.

BLOG SUBMISSION

We want to hear from you! It's important to us that diverse North Carolinian voices are shared on our platform. Our blog will feature submissions from academics, creatives, and public reflections on our state's history. If you're interested in submitting a piece, please reach out to Karl Galloway at karl.galloway@ncdcr.gov.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND MEDIA

For additional resources about how North Carolina is preparing for the 250th anniversary, including publications, webinars recordings, blog posts, and other materials, visit <https://www.ncdcr.gov/experiences/america-250-nc>

For additional information about the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and America 250, visit america250.org American Association for State and Local History Guide and Programs: <https://aaslh.org/programs/250th/>

AMERICA 250 NC LOGOS AND BRANDING GUIDES

Our logos are available for use to our partners! If you are interested in becoming a partner, please visit our [website](#) to access our partner toolkit.

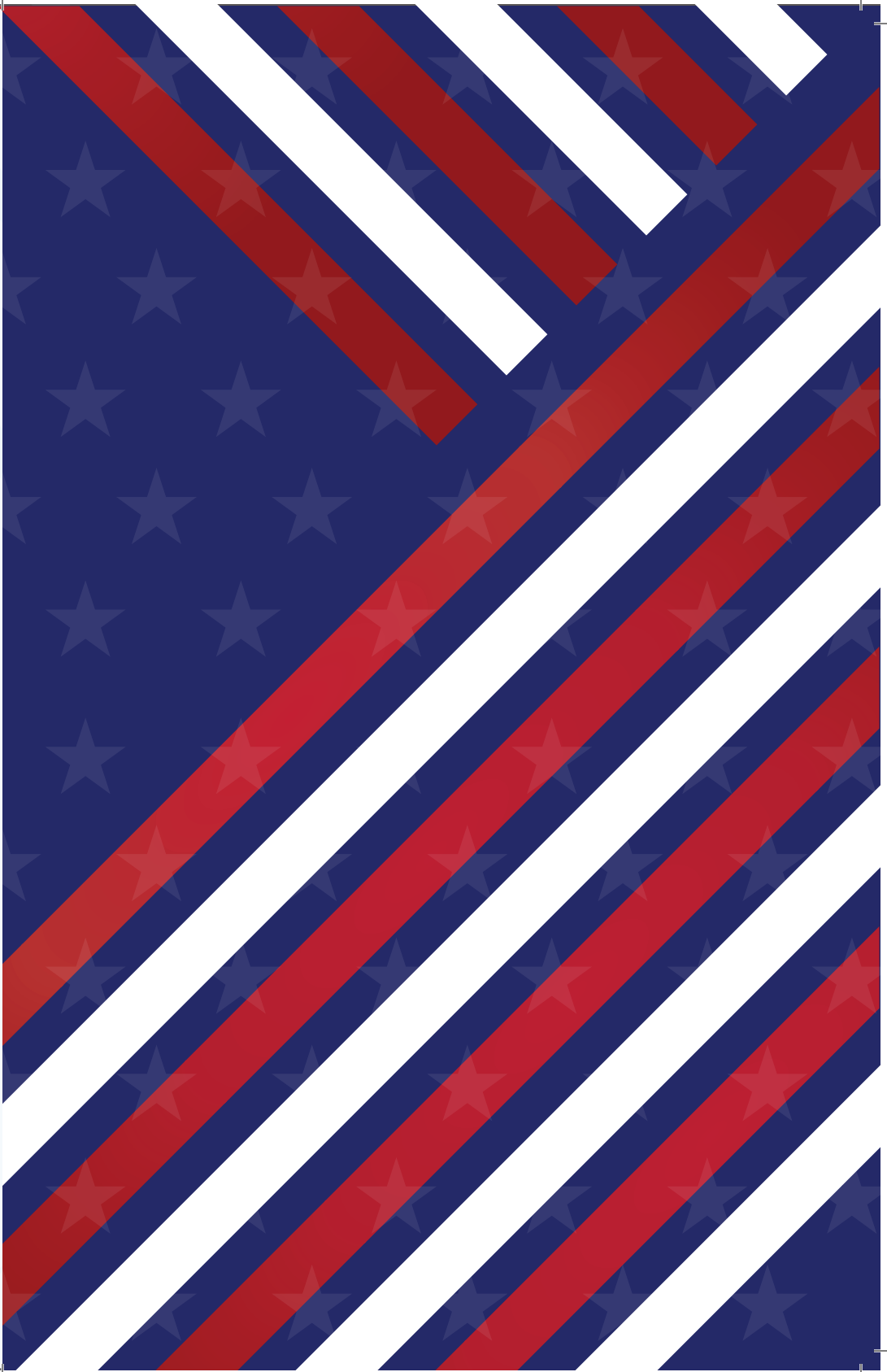


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The background features a stylized American flag with diagonal stripes of red, white, and blue, and a field of small blue stars on a dark blue background.

A M E R I C A

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