



Digital Front Page Dialogue

COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. As of May 14, 2020, there have been over 4 million confirmed cases of the coronavirus worldwide, resulting in nearly 300,000 deaths (1). Truly global in its scope, the virus – which can cause pneumonia-like symptoms and death in the most serious cases – has been found in well over 200 countries.

In the wake of the pandemic, social interactions and community life around the world have been altered in ways that are unprecedented in recent history. Schools have been closed in over 120 countries, affecting more than one billion children (2). Border crossings have been closed or severely restricted by travel bans. Restaurants, sporting events and spaces for civic engagement have been shuttered across the globe. As physical distancing quickly becomes the new normal, many communities are struggling to find appropriate and balanced ways to approach an array of topics, including self-care, social welfare, mental and physical health, and economic concerns, among many others. As members of a global network of more than 275 historic sites, museums and memory initiatives in 65 countries, Sites of Conscience can support their communities in this time of crisis by facilitating constructive conversation on COVID-19 in our world. Below is one model for engaging staff and visitors in dialogue which we encourage you to adapt and ground in the unique history that your organization works to preserve and share.

HOW TO USE FRONT PAGE DIALOGUES

Rather than using all the model questions suggested under each phase, facilitators may select questions that reflect the evolving conversation of the group they are guiding in the dialogue. We also anticipate that you will develop new questions ahead of time or during the dialogue to draw on the strengths of your particular site, organization or community, or to respond to the needs of participants. If you are not familiar with the Arc of Dialogue model, you can contact Braden Paynter (bpaynter@sitesofconscience.org) for support and more information.

This particular dialogue is intended to be facilitated digitally. While digital spaces often compel us to move quickly, these conversations take time, just as they would in person. Take the time you need to build trust and a sense of community early in the dialogue. Video, preferably where everyone can see other simultaneously, is suggested for digital dialogues.

GUIDELINES

What are the group agreements or guidelines for the dialogue that help us establish the “container” that the dialogue occurs within? Here are some sample agreements:

1. Use “I” statements.
2. Leave room for everyone to speak.
3. Engage with care.

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:COVID-19_pandemic_data

2. <https://en.unesco.org/themes/education-emergencies/coronavirus-school-closures>

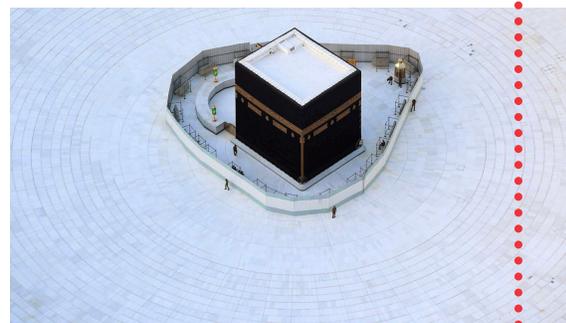
The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a global network of historic sites, museums and memory initiatives connecting past struggles to today's movements for human rights and social justice. To learn more about Coalition methodology and dialogue, contact Braden Paynter at bpaynter@sitesofconscience.org.

SHARED CONTENT

To facilitate this dialogue, one or more of the following articles should be sent to participants ahead of time to create a shared basis from which to begin their conversations

The Guardian, "What Is a Pandemic and Does It Change the Approach to Coronavirus?" March 14, 2020

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/14/what-is-a-pandemic-coronavirus-covid-19>



The Atlantic, "Cancel Everything," March 10, 2020

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/03/coronavirus-cancel-everything/607675/>

Cnn.com, "Photo-essay: The Coronavirus Is Leaving Empty Spaces Everywhere," March 16, 2020

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/12/world/gallery/coronavirus-empty-spaces/index.html>



The New York Times, "Coronavirus Racism Infected My High School," March 14, 2020

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/opinion/Racism-coronavirus-asians.html>



Reuters, "Italians Defy Coronavirus With Mass Singing, Applause for Doctors," March 14, 2020

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-italy/italians-defy-coronavirus-with-mass-singing-applause-for-doctors-idUSKBN2110OV>

Global Voices, "Japan Resurrects 'Amabie,' an Ancient Supernatural Creature, to Fight COVID-19," March 15, 2020

<https://globalvoices.org/2020/03/15/japan-resurrects-amabie-an-old-supernatural-creature-to-fight-covid-19/>





PHASE I - COMMUNITY BUILDING

Questions in Phase I help build the “learning community” by allowing participants to share information about themselves.

Facilitators should welcome the group, introduce themselves, explain their role and the purpose of the dialogue. Facilitators should also ask for agreement on the guidelines established for the group. Community building, agreeing to guidelines, and taking time to get to know one another are as important if not more important in digital versus in-person dialogues. Facilitators should take care not to rush through these early questions, but give participants plenty of time to get to know and trust each other.

How closely have you been following the news? Why?

How has your behavior in public spaces changed or not?

When people ask about your community's responses to COVID-19, which of your communities do you think of and why?

How have you seen someone respond to illness in a way that has inspired hope and positivity?

PHASE II - SHARING OUR OWN EXPERIENCES

Questions in Phase II help participants recognize how their experiences are alike and different and why. Having a shared experience or engagement with content is helpful for deepening conversation. For this Phase it can be particularly helpful to have everyone read one or several of the articles shared above ahead of time.

What steps are you taking to protect yourself and those around you?
What steps aren't you taking?

Have you chosen to stockpile supplies? Why or why not?

What most worries you and what most reassures you about your community's situation?

Who do you trust for information about COVID-19?

What stood out to you about the article(s) you read?

What do you think is misunderstood about the situation?

How are you thinking about your responses across the different social spaces you are a part of?

How are you filling any holes left in your social networks disrupted by the virus?

How is the virus disrupting your family and cultural connections?

How are you engaging in conversations with people whose anxiety levels may be different to yours?



PHASE III - EXPLORING BEYOND OURSELVES

Questions in Phase III help participants engage in inquiry and exploration about the dialogue topic in an effort to learn with and from one another. Phase III can present a challenge in digital conversations. Being able to see people and engaging in early trust-building increases our chances of being able to engage here productively, continuing to learn from each other and about ourselves.

How does COVID-19 intersect with other large-scale societal issues?

How is COVID-19 exacerbating bias or fear of others in your community?

How do we make sure that emergency societal control measures don't turn into permanent shrinking of individual and social rights?

To what extent should governments enforce quarantines?

Who is responsible for caring for the health of a community during widespread sickness? Should special provisions be taken or should the regular systems and markets be expected to handle them?

How do we make sure that protective social distancing measures don't turn into destructive social othering?

Sickness is both a personal and a communal experience. How should people think about balancing individual needs with those of the wider community?

What have you learned about your society from this experience? What have you learned about other societies?

What kind of repair work will we have to do to bring communities together again after the pandemic is over?

PHASE IV - SYNTHESIZING THE EXPERIENCE

Questions in Phase IV help the group to reflect on the dialogue and what they learned. Phase IV is crucial in all dialogues, but particularly when people feel overwhelmed or powerless. This is where dialogue turns our reflection and learning into future action. Even if the group did not fully explore Phase III due to the digital nature of the dialogue, facilitators should still encourage Phase IV.

How will you protect yourself and your community in the future?

Did you find yourself more often responding as an individual or as part of a community during today's conversation?

What more do you want to learn about what has been talked about today?