

So you're going to be a human book...

Thank you for your courage in signing up to be a book in our Living Library! I hope this will be an empowering experience for you and everyone involved.

From the humanlibrary.org:

“The Human Library is not a public relations exercise looking for spectacular headlines; it is not a zoo or display case for rare and exotic species; neither is it a job recruitment agency or a place to exhibit famous people. The Human Library is a tool to foster peaceful cohabitation and bring people closer together in mutual and careful respect for the human dignity of the individual. This is true for the readers, the Books, and the organizers alike.”

Before the Event

Confirm with Liza your book title and availability on the day of the event.

Please choose a simple title that will be clear to readers. It may feel uncomfortable to boil your identity down to one or two words – remember, you can expand on this during the conversation.

Get and wear a pin to help advertise the event! Liza can also give you flyers, if you'd like to have some to hand out.

Leading the Conversation

You will be scheduled for 30 minutes chunks with each reader(s). Most conversations will be one on one, but it is possible you may be checked out by 2 or 3 people at one time (I will check in with you if that is the case). What you discuss is totally up to you and the reader – but keep in mind that folks are selecting you because of your book title.

Not sure how to use that time? Below are some conversation starters to consider.

- Before the event, think of 2-4 short stories from your life that illustrate what having your book title means to you.
- Share any statistics/facts you may know about other folks with your book title. Help to illustrate how your story connects with the experiences of others like you – how are you the same? Different?
- What other elements of your identity and/or life experiences relate to your book title?
- How has having this book title changed what you've studied in school, chosen as a career, where you've lived, your relationships, etc.?
- Ask your reader:
 - Why did you choose me?
 - What has your experience been with people like me? Has it been positive, negative, etc.?
 - What questions do you have for me?

Please keep in mind the goal of this program is greater understanding, not conversion.

Setting Boundaries

You may have elements of your story that you are not willing to share, or readers may ask questions that are uncomfortable for you to answer. How much you share is *totally up to you*. If you find that the conversation is going in a direction you do not want it to go in, share that with the reader and redirect the conversation. You can answer any

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Changes to your schedule? Contact Liza: harringtonl@gcc.mass.edu or 413-775-1836.

question with “I am not comfortable answering that.” It may help your reader to understand if you explain why it is an uncomfortable or inappropriate question but, again, only do that if you are able.

Readers will be asked to keep your stories private – they are not to be shared unless you explicitly say it is ok.

You may end the conversation at any time. If you are made to feel unsafe, please check in with Liza or, in an emergency, contact public safety. We do not anticipate any problems but your safety is paramount. If a conversation goes badly and you would like a break, or need to end for the day, let Liza know.

On the Day of the Event

- Keep track of time. You have 30 minutes with each reader. If you would like more time together, check in with Liza.
- Sit where you are comfortable. Feel free to go anywhere in the library (the lobby, solarium, study rooms) or areas reserved for this event (Liza’s office is available for the entire time; the MacLeish room is available 11:30 to 2).
- Let Liza know if your availability has changed, or if you need a break between sessions.
- Be open and enjoy yourself! You can also be a reader if you would like to chat with another book.