

PART 1: HISTORY AND NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

# COMMUNICATING ACROSS CULTURES

IN A CHANGING CITY

A GUIDE FOR PUBLIC DISCUSSION  
SEPTEMBER 2020



the Interactivity  
Foundation

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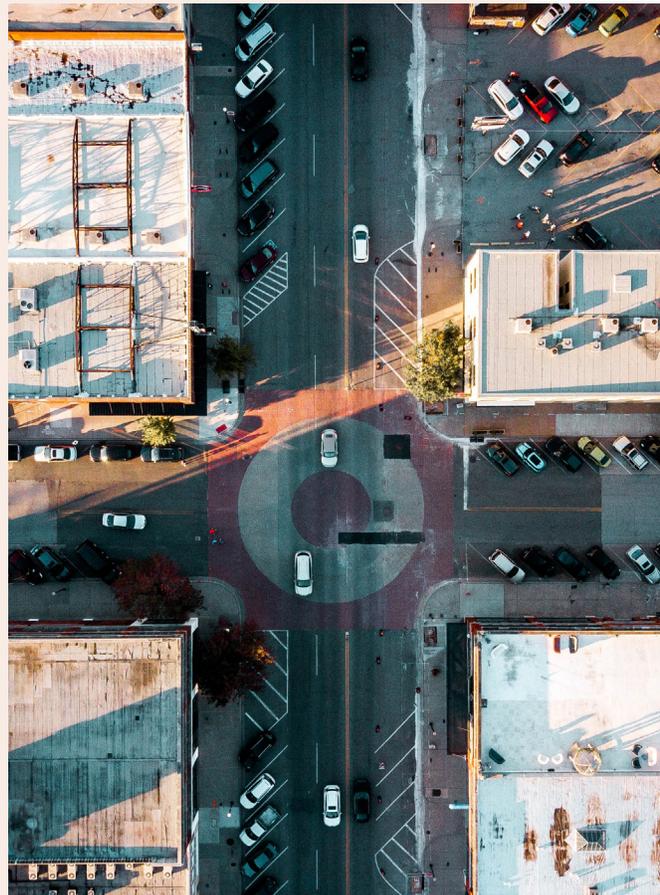
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# COMMENTARY



See March 19, 2019 study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition: "Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities." [www.ncrc.org/gentrification](http://www.ncrc.org/gentrification)

# ABOUT THIS PROJECT

This discussion guide is a tool for groups to talk about how to live together in a community that is changing fast. In the Spring 2019, a study by the National Community Reinvestment Corporation named the District of Columbia the fastest changing city in the United States. A rapid influx of younger, more affluent residents is shifting power and cultural dynamics. Newcomers bring fresh energy, new traditions and identities. Long-timers bring a sense of history, place and earned wisdom.

In the Spring of 2019, a team of researchers at Howard University's Department of Communication, Culture and Media Studies hosted a total of 18 small-group forums. Strangers of all ages, ethnicities and geographic origins sat down, and broke bread across the table in small groups. They listened to live music. They created a safe space to share their cultures, their feelings about their neighborhoods, and to brainstorm how they could better hear each other.

As the team of researchers continues to analyze these forums, a key finding is that more of them are needed. The following guide gives some suggestions for how to host more discussions on the topic of neighborhood history and identity. Part 2 of this discussion guide series facilitates a conversation about how technology is changing what it means to be a neighbor. We invite community groups, schools, faith organizations and other civic groups can use this guide to talk to neighbors, practice empathy—and speak across cultures.

**--Natalie Hopkinson, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Communication,  
Culture and Media Studies at Howard University**

# PART I: SETTING THE STAGE

- 1) Recruit a group of 6-8 people who want to participate. Be intentional about tapping into diverse networks so that all the participants do not already know each other.
- 2) Assign a moderator or facilitator to lead the discussion.
- 3) Set a predetermined beginning and ending time of no more than two hours.
- 4) The engagement should begin with snacks, dinner or brunch. (Potlucks are ideal.)
- 5) Have some paper and pens on hand for participants to write down their ideas.

## GROUND RULES

### ROLE OF FACILITATOR.

The facilitator is there to welcome the group and manage the flow of the conversation. They are there to ensure that each person is heard. They are also there to keep time to move the discussion along. The facilitator should use the questions and prompts in the rest of this report to guide the discussions.

### SAFE SPACE.

Introducing the “Chatham House Rule” may help participants to speak honestly. The rules are as follows: “When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed”

### SHARE THE FLOOR.

Everyone talks before anyone talks a second time.

### LISTEN—DON'T TRY TO CONVINC.

You are there to dialogue- not debate or decide. Practice “Yes, and...” Listen to others and try to build on what they have to say, even if you do not agree.

**“Don't find fault.  
Find a remedy.”**

## PART II: BREAKING THE ICE

For the first round, start with the basics. This is a lightning round to allow each person to introduce themselves.

- a) First name
- b) Hometown
- c) Name of your neighborhood
- d) How long you have lived in there



In the next round, give participants 2 minutes to write the first thing that comes to mind after you give this prompt: Share something that is unique about your neighborhood. What makes it “home?”

### Writing - 2 Min

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In the next round, give participants 2 minutes to write the first thing that comes to mind after you give this prompt: Share something that is unique about your neighborhood. What makes it “home?”

Ask for volunteers. In 60 seconds or less, please share something that you wrote down.

After hearing from everyone else, ask whether anyone in the group heard something that surprised them or stood out as particularly interesting?

**HAVE ONE OR TWO PEOPLE SHARE**







## PART IV: WHAT PUBLIC IMAGES SAY TO ME AND OTHERS

In the next exercise, the group can explore what different images communicate to different people.

Ask for volunteers. In 60 seconds or less, please share something that you wrote down.

### FIRST LIGHTNING ROUND AROUND THE TABLE

In one word, what does this image make you think of?

What does this image represent?







## PART V: CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS

What are some of the obstacles to communicating with neighbors?

How might we overcome some of these obstacles?  
How can we move forward together?

10-minutes before the end of the discussion time, note that it is time to wind down. Ask if anyone would like to share a concluding thought in two minutes or less.

Thank participants. Share any ideas on next steps. Let participants know they can share their experiences on social media under the hashtag #CACtalks or visit [www.communicateculture.com](http://www.communicateculture.com).





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