



**To:** HRRRC

**Agenda Item #:** VI. B.

**From:** Lisa Schaefer  
HRRRC Staff Liaison

**Action**   
**Discussion**   
**Information**

**Date:** March 19, 2013

**Subject:** Community Listening Sessions

**Action Requested:**  
**None.**

**Information / Background:**

Chair Bigbee would like to introduce an idea to the Commission for consideration as a means of community outreach.

**Attachment:**

Advocates Community Listening handout.

**Hosting a Community Conversation**  
**A guide for One Voice Minnesota Monitoring Project volunteers**



Questions? Contact Milena Gebremeskel at  
[mgebremeskel@advrights.org](mailto:mgebremeskel@advrights.org) or 612-746-4695

Materials for event

Download at [http://www.energyofanation.org/monitoring\\_project\\_conversation\\_materials.html](http://www.energyofanation.org/monitoring_project_conversation_materials.html)

- Program with agenda and questions (if desired – can be helpful for large or unfamiliar group)
- What's in a Name handouts for tables
- Nametags
- Flip chart paper or white board
- Abbreviated Universal Declaration of Human Rights for each participant
- Community conversation questions on handouts
- Demographics questionnaires for each participant
- Notepads and pens, one for each small group
- Big paper and markers, one for each small group
- Information (cards and flyers) about project
- Information about the host organization
- Sign up sheet (if desired)
- Camera (if desired)

Set-up:

Room should be arranged in small conversation groups around tables so that the small groups have between 5 and 8 participants. Ideally, food will be provided during the icebreaker and introduction. Before the event begins, identify table leaders/note takers for each small group. These can be people from your organization or volunteers from those who are attending. Explain to each of them that they will be helping facilitate the discussion at their table and taking detailed notes on the notepads provided. Give them the following facilitation tips:

- If participants get off topic or spend too long on a single story or issue, gently steer them back to the question being discussed.
- Ask to hear from people who haven't yet spoken, but don't force people to participate.
- When people mention a specific incident where they felt welcome or unwelcome in their community, ask for details. Try to get basics: when the incident occurred, where it happened, who was involved (relationships or positions if not names), and anything that happened as a result of the incident.
- Try to take notes as close as possible to what people are actually saying. Don't summarize.
- Remember to participate yourself!

Conversation agenda:

This is the complete conversation agenda. **For groups with limited time, at least complete the steps highlighted in the text boxes.**

1. Icebreaker: What's in a Name? (15 min)

**Objective:** To allow participants to get to know each other better.

**Instructions:** This is a good activity to do while people arrive, sign in, get food, and start eating. Make sure everyone has name tags and that all the tables have at least one copy of the "What's in a Name?" questions. Ask participants to share the story behind their name with their group.

They can use the following questions on the handout as prompts:

- Where does your name come from?
- Do you like your name? Why or why not?
- Do you know the meaning of your name?
- How did you get your name?
- What nicknames have people given to you?
- Does your name hide or show your heritage?

**2. Introduction/Context:** Introduce the One Voice Minnesota Monitoring Project and explain the agenda for the evening. Make sure participants know that whatever is discussed at the event will be used anonymously. No one's name or other identifying information will be connected with the information gathered during the conversation. Answer any questions the participants have about what will happen. (5 min)

**3. Large Group Brainstorm:** What does a welcoming community mean to you? (in other words, What things should we be measuring to decide if Minnesota is a welcoming state?) (5-10 min)

**Objective:** To start the conversation and identify areas to discuss in the small groups.

**Instructions:** The moderator will ask the question "What does a welcoming community mean to you?" and write down the group's responses on a piece of flip chart paper or a white board. Try to get as many different kinds of answers as you can. Some people will focus on interpersonal factors (a smile, saying "hello"), while others will focus structural factors (laws that discriminate against immigrants, inequality in funding for minority or poor neighborhoods), and others will look to cultural or societal factors (racism, ignorance of other cultures). All of these are important for the discussion.

After people have discussed the question, ask them to pull out their abbreviated UDHRs. Have people connect the elements of a welcoming community with the human rights they see in the Declaration, and write down their answers on the flip chart in a different color. Point out that one way we can create welcoming communities is to ensure that everyone's human rights are respected and fulfilled.

#### 4. Small Group Discussion (75 min)

**Objective:** To gather information about participants' experiences and perceptions of how their community welcomes immigrants and refugees.

**Instructions:** Look over the seating arrangements and make sure that people are evenly distributed across the small groups. At each of the small conversation groups, one member of the host organization or team will sit as a table leader. They will have a notepad for taking notes – remind them to write clearly. The groups will get 10 minutes to discuss each question before moving on to the next question. Offer people a chance to take a break after question #2.

- Have you, or someone you know well, ever had a problem with any of the topics you identified in the large group discussion?
- How did you or they work to overcome the problem? Did anyone help?
- Do you see other members of the community struggling with any of the issues you identified in the large group discussion?
- What is working well in making sure people feel included in their communities?
- What can we change as individuals, communities, and a state to be more welcoming?

During the discussion, the table leader should help keep the conversation on track.

- If participants get off topic or spend too long on a single story or issue, gently steer them back to the question being discussed.
- Ask to hear from people who haven't yet spoken, but don't force people to participate.
- When people mention a specific incident where they felt welcome or unwelcome in their community, ask for details. Try to get basics: when the incident occurred, where it happened, who was involved (relationships or positions if not names), and anything that happened as a result of the incident.
- Try to take notes as close as possible to what people are actually saying. Don't summarize.
- Remember to participate yourself!

#### 5. Draw the Human Rights Connection (15 min)

**Objective:** To connect the experiences of participants to international human rights.

**Instructions:** Give each table a large piece of white paper or flip chart paper and markers. Remind participants of what they did as a large group at the beginning of the meeting, linking human rights to a welcoming community. They are going to repeat the process with their own findings. The small groups should choose 4 or 5 themes they heard over the course of the discussion and write them on one side of the white paper. Then ask the groups to match those themes to human rights found in the abbreviated UDHR. Circulate among the groups to help them find the rights.

## 6. Large Group Discussion: Summary of Results (5 min)

**Objective:** To report the results of the small group discussions and to draw conclusions as a group about ways Minnesota can be more welcoming to immigrants.

**Instructions:** The table leaders each take a few minutes to read back the results of their discussion, focusing on the themes they chose, the human rights they identified, and the solutions they identified. The moderator should draw connections between the ideas expressed at each table.

### 6. Wrap-up:

- Ask participants to fill out the demographic questionnaires and turn them in.
- Remind participants that the results of their discussion will be used in the report to be published in early 2014 and provide contact information for The Advocates in case anyone has any questions.
- Announce any specific action your organization or team wants participants to do (sign up for a newsletter or follow up, participate in a future event, etc).
- **Thank everyone for coming!**