COVID-19 American History Project

CONVERSATION GUIDE

OVERVIEW:
The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress is partnering with StoryCorps to tell a more diverse and holistic story of the pandemic as told directly by the people who lived through it.

We invite you to share a 40-minute conversation with a loved one to talk about your experience during the Covid-19 pandemic. With your permission, these conversations will be archived in the StoryCorps Online Archive and at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

CONVERSATION TIPS:
- Think of it as a conversation, not an interview. Be authentic and follow your curiosity.
- Breathe. Feel free to let pauses or silences linger.
- Keep in mind that future listeners may not be familiar with the people and places you mention. So, give a little context.
- Ask follow-up questions that encourage details —like “what was going through your mind when...” or “What did you see/hear/feel when...”

KEEP IN MIND:
Participants typically get through 5-6 questions in one recording session. The following questions can serve as a starting point for your conversation, but please remember that this time is for you.

None of these questions are required, and you are welcome to add and explore questions of your own.

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Suggested Questions

Starter Questions:

● Can you tell me about where you grew up?
● What were you like when you were a child?
● Who were your role models?

Questions for people working in the Healthcare industry:

● What or who inspired you to work in your chosen field?
● What are you most proud of in your career?
● Are there any patients that you particularly remember?
● What do you wish people knew about your job?

Questions about Covid-19:

● When did you first realize the pandemic would change the world and/or your way of life?
● What was going through your mind at the beginning of the pandemic?
● Can you describe the discussions about COVID-19 among your family, friends, and co-workers in the early days of the pandemic?
● Do any moments stick out in your memory as “peak pandemic”?
● What challenges did you experience because of the pandemic (and how have you navigated them)?
  ○ What challenges did you see others facing?
  ○ What challenges still exist for you and others?
● What people, places, or services were most important to you during that time?
● Who did you turn to for support?

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• Was there anything that brought you joy amidst the pandemic?
• Did anything “positive” result from the pandemic?
• What are you most proud of during the pandemic?
• What do you miss most about life pre-pandemic?
• What do you wish more people knew about your experience during Covid?
• Is there a specific story you would share to illustrate this time in American life for your great-grandchildren or for those living 50, 100, or 200 years from now?

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