A Place for All of Us
Human Library
Part of the University of Alberta’s Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Week

The Global Education Program (University of Alberta International), the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion office (Human Resource Services), the Canadian Mental Health Association Edmonton Region student group, and University of Alberta Libraries will be hosting a Human Library during Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Week 2018. We are seeking your help in locating high-quality human “books” to participate in the event.

What is a Human Library?

A Human Library is a safe space where visitors can speak one-on-one or in very small groups to “people on loan” or human “books”. The “books” are individuals from various demographics who have experienced stereotyping or prejudice or who have undergone a life experience that is often mischaracterized or misunderstood.

The people we meet are significant sources of information for us, as they enable us to encounter experiences and knowledge beyond our own. With this in mind, the Human Library strives to create opportunities for students, staff, and community members to explore diverse perspectives and experiences, to challenge stereotypes, prejudice and popular misconceptions, and to reaffirm human dignity through respectful conversations with human “books”. Through these conversations, there is the potential to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for all.

The Human Library is an international phenomenon and has been held in countries around the world since its founding in 2000. For more information, visit the global organizers forum at http://humanlibrary.org.

Human Libraries in Edmonton and at the University of Alberta

The Human Library is not new to the Edmonton area. The University of Alberta has hosted Human Libraries at the Augustana campus since 2009 and the Edmonton Public Library hosted one in partnership with the CBC in 2013.

North campus hosted its first Human Library in Rutherford Library during International Week 2015. The second and third Human Library’s were hosted during Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Week in 2016 and 2017. Here is what some participants had to say:

- “It is an extraordinary opportunity to be able to engage people in this way. I loved the interactive nature.”
- “You cannot help but be changed if you participated”
- “I thoroughly enjoyed how engaging and open the conversations were”

Know a great “book”? Recommend them!

We are seeking “books” whose stories of adversity and triumph can help to challenge stereotypes or mischaracterizations and humanize otherwise abstract experiences. “Books” may have personally
encountered stereotyping and prejudice or they may have undergone a significant but often
misunderstood life experience. For example, a person who has lived in a war zone could share the
physical and emotional trauma of living in the midst of war and how it has impacted their life.
Furthermore, they may share their perceptions of how others see them and treat them.

“Books” may be U of A students, faculty, or staff or individuals external to the University. “Books” could
be people who have experienced stereotyping or prejudice based on their:

- Immigration status (eg. refugee/displaced person, foreign or migrant worker)
- Gender (eg. Working in a non-traditional field, transgender)
- Socio-economic status (eg. a person who has experienced homelessness or poverty)
- Culture, race or ethnicity
- Sexual orientation
- Religious or political beliefs
- Abilities (eg. a person with invisible or physical disabilities, various medical diagnosis)
- Family Status (eg. Single parent, foster care)
- Any intersections of the above
- Any additional identities/​experiences

However, this list is by no means exhaustive.

This year’s Human Library is scheduled for March 22 and 23, 2018 from 2pm to 7pm. Each day will be
composed of a one hour orientation, three 45 minute conversations (with a break in between) and time
for a debrief after the last conversation. “Books” may choose to participate in either days, but we do
prefer that “books” participate in both days.

The Human Library will be held on-campus in Rutherford Library.

If you know of anyone who could be a great “book”, please let us know. You can call or e-mail us -- we
would love to hear your suggestions and discuss the best way to approach these individuals (e.g., you
might like to approach them first of all). Our hope is to confirm our books by the beginning of February.
As such, we ask that let us know before February 2, 2018 if you are interested.

Thank you for your assistance in making this a deeply worthwhile learning experience.

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