



KENTUCKY
HUMANITIES

Presents

Our American Story:
Kentucky's Voices

Remembering Together

With support from





Remembering Together

A Community Conversation Guide

Every community has its own history – stories of hard work, traditions passed down, times of struggle, and moments of celebration. Whether it's remembering the old schoolhouse, honoring those who served, or sharing family stories at the dinner table, commemoration connects us to one another and gives our community strength. Sharing the stories we remember isn't just about talking about the past, it helps us understand what it means for us right now and how we can keep our community strong for the future. This guide is designed to spark conversation about how your community is **Remembering Together**, and to create space for people to share the stories that shape their sense of place and identity.

Kentucky Humanities presents *Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices*, a statewide series of

community programs and discussions that invite communities across the Commonwealth to share their unique traditions and experiences with one another and with the nation. Together, these stories help tell a broader story of what it means to be a Kentuckian, reflecting on the past 250 years and looking toward the future.

Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices is part of the national initiative *By the People: Conversations Beyond 250*, a series of community-driven programs created by humanities councils in collaboration with local partners. The initiative was developed by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. *Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices* is also supported with funding from the America250KY Commission and the Kentucky Historical Society.

Kentucky Humanities Presentations

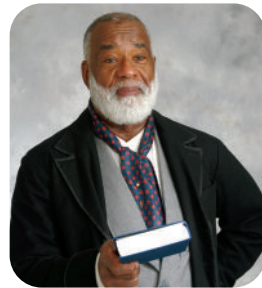
Remembering Together

The following Kentucky Humanities programs connect especially well to the *Remembering Together* theme and can serve as conversation starters for your event. More information about each presentation along with presenter contact information can be found [here](#).

Kentucky Chautauqua®



Madeline McDowell Breckinridge
"Votes for Women!"



William Wells Brown
How I Got My Name



Justice John Marshall Harlan
The Great Dissenter



Colonel Charles Young
Bridge Builder

Speakers Bureau



Geoff Baggett
Revolutionary War in a Truck



Jim Claypool
Songs of Kentucky's Civil War



Mary Hamilton
Liar, Liar, Storyteller



Dr. Pearlie Johnson
Quilt Art: Examining the Narrative in Kentucky Quilts



Alicestyne Turley
The Underground Railroad and American Memory



Let's Talk

Tips for Meaningful Humanities Discussions

Community conversations can be inspiring, meaningful, and sometimes a little challenging. It takes a little care to help people feel comfortable sharing. As a discussion leader, your role isn't to have all the answers but to create space, guide the flow, and invite conversation. The tips below are meant as support, not rules. Use what works best for your community.

- Keep the conversation casual to encourage shared exploration, not debate.
- Whenever possible, create more intimate, welcoming spaces for conversation. Avoid large conference rooms or theatres when possible. Consider theatre-in-the-round style seating or around a smaller tables to make it easier for people to share with each other.
- Introduce the program using the Introduction in this guide.
- Start the conversation with a story or anecdote that people can relate to. You might consider identifying one or two people who will be at the event ahead of time. Talk to them about sharing a story about this theme. This will allow you to start off the conversation by calling on them for that story to get conversation started or to redirect back to storytelling when conversation starts to lag.
- Ask open-ended, layered questions. The discussion questions on the following pages are just a guide. Move from surface level questions like, "What do you think/notice?" to questions like, "How does this connect to your own experience?" As the conversation continues, consider questions that are forward-looking like, "What does this suggest about our future as a community?"
- Listen more than you talk. Try paraphrasing an answer, thanking people for their input, encouraging curiosity, and inviting others to respond.
- Balance the voices in the conversation and keep things moving. Invite people who haven't spoken yet, and remember that listening is also a form of participation.
- Be ok with some tension. It's okay if not everyone agrees all the time. Differences of perspective are part of community. When tension arises, you can help by emphasizing shared experiences or values.
- Allow participants time to reflect and process as you near the end of the discussion. Consider a question like, "What do you want Kentucky and/or the nation to know about your community?" or, "What is one word or phrase you're taking away from this conversation?"
- Be sure to thank participants for sharing and encourage them to participate in your documentation process (written, video, audio, etc).



Let's Talk

Discussion Questions

These questions are grouped by topic and are meant to spark storytelling and reflection. You do not need to ask them all. We have bolded a couple key questions to help, but you are free to choose what feels most meaningful for your group or even add your own questions.

Remembrance and Commemoration

- What events, people, or moments does your community tend to remember or commemorate? Are there festivals, memorials, anniversaries, or gatherings that help mark those memories?
- Every community experiences pivotal moments. Can you share a story about a moment that feels important in your community's history?
- Communities often remember the past in different and sometimes conflicting ways. How do you feel about that complexity?
- How have celebrations and commemorations changed in your lifetime?
- Do you think it's important to remember difficult or painful parts of history, as well as moments of joy or pride? Why or why not?
- **Choose something your community commemorates. Why do you think remembering that event or person matters?**
- Are there stories, people, or events you wish your community commemorated more or differently?
- Are there stories that you feel represent your community but aren't often shared?
- In another 250 years, what do you think your community will still be remembered for?

Storytelling and Legacy

- How does your personal story connect to the story of your family, your community, or Kentucky more broadly?
- **If you chose to live in this community, what drew you here? If you grew up here, what made you stay. If you left and returned, what brings you back?**
- Can you share a personal memory connected to a place, event, or celebration in your community?
- Stories aren't only told through words. How do objects like recipes, quilts, photographs, monuments, landscapes, or family land tell stories in your community?
- **How do your families and communities share stories and stay connected when people live far apart?**
- As communities change or face challenges, what feels important to preserve for future generations?

Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices

Introduction

Kentucky Humanities presents *Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices*, a statewide series of community conversations that invite people to share the traditions, experiences, and stories that shape their communities.

Commemoration and remembrance are ways communities connect – to their past, to one another, and to the future. Sharing the stories we remember carries memories of family, struggle, and community, while also helping guide the path forward.

Today we are talking about how our community is *Remembering Together*. We're here to listen, reflect, and learn from one another – and to hear what makes your community's stories meaningful.

For use with a Kentucky Chautauqua® or Speakers Bureau presentation:

We'll begin by hearing from [Presenter's Name] about [brief description of the presentation]. After, we'll invite you to share your own experiences and reflections as part of our community conversation.

This program is part of the national initiative *By the People: Conversations Beyond 250*, a series of community-driven programs created by humanities councils in collaboration with local partners. The initiative was developed by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. *Our American Story: Kentucky's Voices* is also supported with funding from the America250KY Commission and the Kentucky Historical Society.

Once you have completed your program, please use the QR code or click [here](#) to complete your Final Report. This form will allow you to upload pictures, A/V, and other relevant program documentation.



Sponsors



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Kentucky Humanities is an independent, nonprofit affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities in Washington, D.C. Kentucky Humanities is supported by the National Endowment and by private contributions. Kentucky Humanities is not a state agency, but is a proud partner with Kentucky's cultural, heritage, arts, and tourism agencies. Since its founding in 1972, Kentucky Humanities has invested more than \$20 million in public programs for Kentuckians. Learn more at kyhumanities.org.

The Federation of State Humanities Councils

Founded in 1977, the Federation of State Humanities Councils (Federation) is the membership organization of the 56 state and jurisdictional humanities councils. The Federation supports, connects, and amplifies the work and voices of its members, demonstrating councils' value for communities and their collective impact on civic health and cultural vibrancy. Learn more about the Federation and its member councils at statehumanities.org.

The Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage

The Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage promotes greater understanding and sustainability of cultural heritage across the United States and around the world through research, education, and community engagement. The center is a research and educational unit of the Smithsonian that produces the Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, the Cultural Vitality Program, the online Folklife Magazine, exhibitions, symposia, publications, and educational materials. It also maintains the Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives and Collections. Learn more at festival.si.edu.

The Kentucky Historical Society

The Kentucky Historical Society (KHS) was formed in 1836 by a group of prominent Kentuckians intent on preserving the history of the Commonwealth. KHS is a membership organization with members from Kentucky and around the world. KHS is part of the Kentucky Tourism, Arts and Heritage Cabinet; has full American Alliance of Museums accreditation; and is a Smithsonian affiliate. Learn more at history.ky.gov.

