



Of, By and For the People

#unifyUSA is an inter-partisan citizens' movement dedicated to sparking our political imagination.

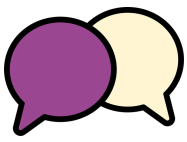


 **unify** USA

+

**Living Room
Conversations**





Of, By and For the People

Let's talk about the Constitution

The role of the Constitution of the United States is to ensure basic human rights and frame the conditions for a healthy democracy. While the President, Congress, and the Supreme Court continually interpret the document, there have been few changes to it in the past 200 years (those changes focused primarily on an expansion of rights and election reform). Peoples' perceptions of the Constitution range from sacred and unchangeable to flawed and collapsing. As we approach our 250th anniversary as a country, we are asked to look to our past as well as our future.

If we were to unlock our political imagination, what kind of America could we be? What kind of voice and influence could and should every day Americans have? How could the Constitution help get us there? This guide is designed to assess where we are and the possibilities of where we could be as we consider our founding document, its promises and its shortcomings.

Hosts participate using the italicized language to guide the conversation.

What is a Living Room Conversation?

It is a simple, structured way for 4-7 people to communicate and build connections. 4-7 people meet in person or by video call to listen to and be heard by others. We take turns talking to share, learn, and be curious. It is not a debate

Introductions

Share your name, where you live and what drew you here.

Each participant has 1 minute to introduce themselves.

The Conversation Agreements

These set the tone for the conversation and introduce you to the skills you will be practicing. Take turns reading them out loud.

- **Be curious and listen to understand.** Conversation is as much about listening as it is about talking. You might find you learn more about someone's values and perspectives just by listening.
- **Show respect and suspend judgment.** Setting judgment aside allows you to learn from others. It also makes them feel respected and appreciated. Try to listen without interruption or crosstalk.
- **Note any common ground as well as any differences.** Look for areas of agreement or shared values that may arise and take an interest in the differing beliefs and opinions of others.
- **Be authentic and welcome that from others.** Share what's important to you. Speak from your experience. Be considerate of others who are doing the same.
- **Be purposeful and to the point.** Do your best to keep your comments concise and relevant to the question you are answering. Be conscious of sharing airtime with other participants.
- **Own and guide the conversation.** Take responsibility for the quality of your participation and the conversation as a whole. Be proactive in getting yourself and others back on track if needed.

Let's Talk

This conversation includes answering prompts without interruption and having time to explore what you heard from others in the group. Keeping time helps to equalize power dynamics. The host or a participant can keep time and let others know when they should wrap up.

Round One: Getting to Know Each Other (~15 min)

Each participant can take 2 minutes to answer one question below while other participants focus on listening to what is being shared.

- What would your best friend say about who you are?
- What are your hopes and concerns for your family and/or community?
- What sense of purpose/mission/duty guides you in your life?

Round Two: Exploring the Topic (~40 min)

Each participant chooses a question below and takes ~2 minutes to answer without interruption or crosstalk. After everyone has answered, the group may take ~10 minutes to explore what you've heard from each other before going back to answer another question.

- The Constitution describes a government of, by, and for the people. When have you experienced this idea to be true? When has it not been true for you or others in your community?
- What significance does the Constitution have in your life? How has your understanding of and relationship to the Constitution shifted over time?
- When you think about our rights, elections, and governance what do you most appreciate and want to preserve? What are you most frustrated with and want to change?
- What is your hope for America moving forward? What role and responsibility do you have in making that hope a reality?
- What do you most wish we could accomplish together and why?

Round Three: Reflecting on the Conversation (~15 min)

Take 1-2 minutes to answer one of the following questions:

- What was most meaningful/valuable to you in this conversation?
- What learning, new understanding or common ground was found on the topic?
- How has this conversation shifted your perception of others or yourself?
- Is there a next step you would like to take based upon the conversation you just had?



Scan this QR code to tell us about your conversation and earn a digital Civics Credential badge you can post on your LinkedIn page!

About #unifyUSA



Join #unifyUSA and catalyze Citizens' Assemblies in your local community.

- This inter-partisan citizens' movement calls on Americans to "[Hit Refresh on the U.S. Constitution](#)" and create a fourth branch of government– a permanent Citizens' Assembly.
- A Citizens' Assembly is a process where everyday Americans from all walks of life come together to learn from each other as well as experts. Participants deliberate, debate, and co-create solutions together that reflect the will of the people.

Tips + Strategies for a Smooth Conversation

Conversations can go off track. Trust the format of the conversation guide, it's designed to help you. Here are some tips that may be useful. You can also refer to the Conversation Agreements.

- **Over talkers**
 - Acknowledge contribution and open it back up to the group
 - *"Fred, it seems like you have a lot of experience with this topic. Thank you for sharing. Does anyone else have similar or different experiences with the topic?"*
- **Cross talkers**
 - Gently redirect
 - *"It looks like Fred and Ginger are really connecting. How about the rest of you, do you have an experience that is similar or different from theirs?"*
- **Off track**
 - Reel the group back in
 - *"It sounds like many of you are interested in the way socio-economics affects racial disparity. Is that something we want to continue to explore, or do we want to go back to one of the questions from the guide?"*
- **Sweeping statements or opinions**
 - Reinforce personal experience. Invite speaker to reframe statement or attach an experience
 - *"Have you experienced something like this? What has that looked like in your own life?"*
- **Strong tension emerging**
 - Take the pulse of the room & use a few breaths to help regulate everyone's nervous system
 - *"Who else is feeling strong emotions right now? Let's pause and take a few breaths together"*
- **Going Over Time**
 - Remind participant of the timing allotted for each person
 - *"Sorry to interrupt, but I want to make sure everyone has time to speak. Could you please wrap up that thought?"*
 - If interrupting feels uncomfortable, you can also use the timer on your phone and have it automatically go off for each participant to signal the end of their turn

Final reminders:

- Share the work. Let folks know this conversation involves participation by everyone.
 - Ask folks to help keep track of time, take turns reading, etc.
- These conversations are meant to be enjoyable and social.
 - It's OK to laugh, make mistakes, and show your personality. This will put others at ease too.



This is fundamentally a love story—of people who love democracy, who love truth, and who love future generations enough to do the difficult work of renewal, right here and right now! .

- Paul Zeitz