

# HUMAN LIBRARY.ORG

## FAQ

*It is common to have many questions when considering organising a Human Library and so we have compiled some answers to the most frequently asked questions below.*

### **What exactly is a Human Library?**

*The Human Library is an equalities project, created by Ronni Abergel, Dany Abergel, Christoffer Erichsen and Asma Mouna of the Danish youth organisation Stop The Violence in 2000 and it is now operational in more than 60 countries. It was developed to challenge societal prejudices wherever and for whatever reasons they occur, and to help people form a better understanding of those with whom they share their communities.*

### **Who usually organises Human Libraries?**

*Human Libraries are organised by anyone who understands the importance of challenging the stereotypes and prejudice that often leads to stigma and discrimination, and who want to promote respect for difference and diversity in their communities. Human Libraries can be organised by a single person or organisation but usually work much more effectively when organised by a range of people with different backgrounds and experiences.*

### **Where do events usually take place?**

*Human Libraries have traditionally been held in public libraries, festivals, colleges and universities and even conferences, schools and shopping centres. A Human Library can be held wherever there is likely to be plenty of people you can attract to borrow and read!*

### **What is a Human Book?**

*A Human Book is a person who has volunteered to challenge prejudice through respectful conversation with members of the public who borrow them. They will have a title that relates to their experience of prejudice and/or discrimination.*

### **Can anyone be a Human Book?**

*No. Only people who have experienced prejudice due to issues such as race, sex, age, disability, sexual preference, gender identity, class, religion/belief, lifestyle choices or other aspects of who they are can be a Book. The title they choose must directly reflect this in order to challenge the Reader to take out their prejudice.*

### **How many Books do you need for an event?**

*Events have varied from just a couple of Books to more than 70, but the best advice is to try and recruit as many Books as you can and with a wide range of experiences related to prejudice. The number of Books you recruit will depend on the space you are using and the number of Staff that you have available. Somewhere between 10-15 Books has been*

*good for many first time Organisers as it enables a good variety of titles and can be managed by a relatively small staff team (3-5).*

## **How would we make sure Books are safe at the Human Library?**

*Safety is an understandable priority for Organisers and this topic is fully explored in our free Guide to Organisers, and in other publications relating to the Human Library. It is important to state that, out of the many thousands of conversations that have happened through Human Library events around the world, the safety of Books has never been seriously compromised. There are many actions Organisers can take to safeguard Books, including who and how you recruit, the roles of Staff, and the creation of a 'safe word' or phrase to enable the controlled and safe ending of conversations if necessary.*

## **Can we have a single themed Human Library to reflect the work of our organisation?**

*No. The only aim for the Human Library is to engender an understanding that we share our communities with people from all walks of life, and that some of those people are subjected to prejudice and discrimination. The Human Library challenges the stereotypes and prejudice which can form opinions in any one of us.*

## **Can Books choose creative and quirky titles?**

*Organisers should make it clear to all Books that their role is to challenge stereotypes and prejudice relating to their own experiences. Therefore their titles should be directly related to this experience and as simple as possible. Examples of effective titles are: Refugee, Bipolar, Gay Man, Ex-Gang Member, Muslim, HIV+, Transgender, Young Single Parent, Recovering Alcoholic, Migrant Worker, Ex-Offender, Police Officer, Politician, etc.*

*In order to challenge a stereotype or prejudice the Book title needs to provoke these in a potential Reader.*

## **Can we use the Human Library to promote our work or ideologies?**

*No. The Human Library has been created specifically as an equalities project to challenge stereotype, prejudice, stigma and discrimination. It should never be used to further specific ideologies, promote an organisation or individuals' business, or for any commercial reasons.*

If you have any other questions, please write us at [info@humanlibrary.org](mailto:info@humanlibrary.org)