



## FAQ

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

### **What exactly is the Human Library™?**

*The Human Library is a concept 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 on five continents. It is a library of human beings, individuals, that each represent a group in the community that are somehow exposed to stigma, prejudice and/or discrimination.*

*The Human Library™ aims to establish a safe conversational space, where difficult questions are expected, appreciated and hopefully answered by the Human Book on loan.*

*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.*

*The Human Library™ offers its patrons to become readers, by taking a person out on loan for a conversation on the topic/issue, that they represent. I.e. the Police Officer would talk about stereotypes and prejudices that police officers meet in their job and answer any question the reader may have about this topic.*

*Conversations are offered to a duration of thirty minutes and this is not a storytelling session, but rather an experience sharing with built-in Q&A. The outcome of the session and direction of the talk is dependant on what the reader/s asks about. And it is the privilege of both parties, that they can end the conversation at any point they may wish.*

### **Who can organize a Human Library™?**

*A Human Library in principle can be organized by anyone who understands the importance of challenging the stereotypes and prejudice that often leads to stigma and discrimination, and who wants to promote respect for difference and diversity in their community. Human Libraries can be organized by a group of individuals or an organization/institution. Events are presented by public libraries, student groups, universities, high schools, colleges, festivals, non governmentals, public authorities and private partners. However permission is needed from the HLO.*

### **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 reflect on the stigmatization that occurs.*

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

*Events have varied from 5-7 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 will need and will be able to “publish” depends on the space you are using and the number of Staff that you have available to help you. Somewhere between 10-15 Books has been a good starting point for many first time Organizers as it enables a nice variety of titles and it can be managed by a relatively small staff team (3-5). Keep the rest in a Virtual Book Depot for recycling purposes. The Human Library is 100% green.*

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

*Safety is an understandable priority for Organizers and in these times of polarization we recommend giving attention to ensuring the safety of all participants. We always keep our books in a “Book Depot” away from the readers. Readers are not allowed in the depot and the depot manager makes sure of that. This is where the books can rest and eat and wait for the next reader to invite them out for a chat.*

*All readers are screened at the desk by our librarian. The desk area is away from the Depot. We try to get in touch with each reader and try to find out what their expectations are and ask what kind of questions they have thought about. Did you try the Human Library before? We like that our librarians engage with the readers and that we do our best to make sure that readers have no ill will towards our books. If we are in doubt, we do not give out a book.*

*We do not allow censorship of the Human Library, but it is the clear responsibility of the local organizer to ensure that the topics published are not at risk or put in harms way by coming out in public. We need to bring about difficult topics and help facilitate conversations and dialogue, that can lead to greater insight and understanding, but we need always take the safety our books and staff into consideration.*

*That said, it is important to state that, out of the many hundreds of 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 Organizers can take to safeguard Books, and those should always try to rely on a local risk assessment of the event. In some countries you can publish many different titles and it will not pose a risk and in other countries you can risk that some titles may arouse very strong reactions with individuals or groups of individuals in the local community.*

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

*No. The 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.*

*We do not endorse, approve or encourage "thematic" events, as they do not offer readers a true choice of content and thus it is not a Library, but a special collection.*

*Our dream is that the Human Library will remain a platform for all the stigmatized groups in the community. And so we try to avoid such events as we must insist that at least five groups from our seven pillars of prejudices are included. For us they are ethnicity, religion, sexuality, occupation, social status, lifestyle and health & disabilities*

## **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 common titles at European events: Refugee, Bipolar, Gay Man, Disabled, Ex-Gang Member, Muslim, HIV+, Transgender, Young Single Parent, Recovering Alcoholic, Migrant Worker, Ex-Offender, Police Officer, Politician, Ex-Gambler, Unemployed, (always dependant on the local community).*

*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 organization 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)