Community Discussions

Guide
Make sure to kick-off the conversation by reviewing any ground rules. Then ask people to introduce themselves (go around the table and ask people to tell everyone their first name, where they live, and what they like to do in their free time).

1. How would you describe the kind of community you want Nashville (or another community) to be?

2. Given what we just said, what are the 2 to 3 most important issues or concerns when it comes to the community?
We will now focus the conversation on Next Door Neighbors issues.

1. What are the benefits to our Nashville communities (and the United States) of having immigrants come to our country?

2. What are the challenges?

AND/OR

1. As a community, what are our responsibilities to welcome immigrants to our Nashville communities?

2. What responsibilities do immigrants have to become part of our communities?

Language…

1. To what extent should immigrants receive help to master English?
2. Who should provide this type of assistance?
   - Non-profit and/or religious organizations
   - Schools and community colleges
   - Taxpayer funded programs

3. What accommodations, if any, should be made for immigrants who still haven’t mastered English?
   - Schools provide parents with information in native language
   - Drivers license tests in native language

How does this fit with the idea that we want immigrants to be productive members of society, to work and to help their children gain a good education?
Government Services and Education…

1. What government services, if any, should immigrants be eligible to receive?

2. What type of commitment should we make to ensure that the children of immigrants receive a high quality education?

3. To what extent should the community (i.e. taxpayers) support the extra services that are needed to help educate children who may speak a different language at home?
For the next few issues, we would just like to try to understand one another better. The topics – religion, culture, crime, and neighborhoods – came up in our previous discussions.

Religion…

As we all know, many immigrants are of different religious backgrounds.

Ask of non-immigrants:

1. As a community, what responsibilities do we have to show respect for immigrants’ different religious backgrounds?

2. Specifically, what responsibilities do we have to make sure that Muslim immigrants are not made to feel as if they are “enemies of the United States”?

3. What does it look like to show respect for different people’s religions? What’s an example?

Ask of immigrants:

1. What responsibilities, if any, do immigrants have to acknowledge the dominant religion in this country? To what extent do immigrants need to accommodate Christian traditions?

2. What would it take for you to feel that your religion is being respected?

3. Specifically, those of you who are Muslim, what would it take for you not to feel that your considered an “enemy”? 
Culture, Crime and Safety…

There is a perception among some long time residents of Nashville that immigrant youth are a source of crime and violence in our communities.

Many immigrants express concern that a permissive youth culture in the United States has a negative influence on their children. It makes it more difficult for parents to instill the values of respect and discipline, for instance.

Ask of immigrants:

1. What is it about American culture that concerns you?

2. What aspects of American culture, if any, do you think benefit your children?

3. How do you try to deal with these cultural influences?

Ask of non-immigrants:

1. What do you see happening that makes people feel immigrant youth are a source of crime and violence?

2. How do you respond to immigrant families who say that is an unfair generalization and their children are being unfairly singled out?
Neighborhoods…

As we noted at the beginning, this project is called “Next Door Neighbors.” We want you to think about your own neighborhoods.

1. What do our neighborhoods gain from diversity?

2. What are the challenges of diversity in our neighborhoods?

3. What do you think is needed for all of us to feel safe, respected and to live in peace with one another?

Come Back to Illegal Immigration

As we noted at the beginning of the conversation, we want to come back to the issue of illegal immigration. We are not going to try to solve this issue today. We just want to understand people’s perspectives better.

1. For those of you concerned about illegal immigration, what concerns you most? Why is that a concern?
2. Under what conditions, if any, should immigrants who are here illegally be allowed to stay in this country? Under what conditions, should we welcome these immigrants to our communities?

3. How, if at all, should we support immigrants who are here illegally but are contributing to our communities – e.g. paying taxes, etc.

4. How should we support the children of immigrants who are here illegally?

Wrap Up

1. What do you take away from the conversation tonight? What did you learn?

2. To what extent do you feel that you better understand other people’s perspectives (even if you don’t agree with them)?

3. What questions will you leave here thinking about?

4. Any last thoughts or comments?