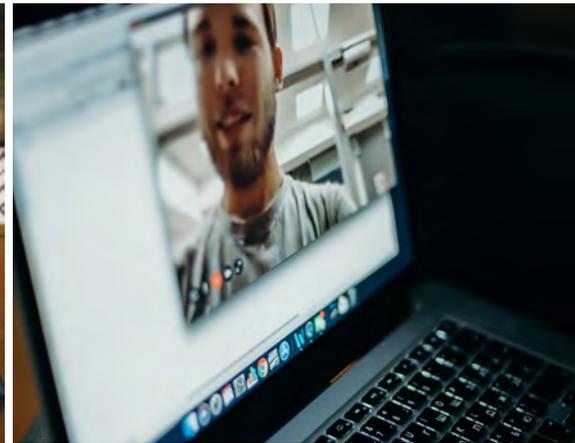


# *Justice Talking*

The Meaning of Service

## Virtual Toolkit



# Justice Talking: The Meaning of Service

## **A Toolkit for Virtual Conversations**

Welcome to the digital *Justice Talking* toolkit. The toolkit is designed to support you this year as you utilize existing virtual tools to have meaningful conversations regardless of the distance between you and your peers. It is meant to serve as an addendum to the *Justice Talking* Facilitator's Handbook. Virtual sessions rely on the same core principles of the *Justice Talking* facilitation method described in your manual. The toolkit offers recommendations to adapt *Justice Talking* sessions to be successful in a virtual setting.

### **This toolkit includes:**

- Virtual Facilitation Manual Addendum
- A Planning Outline
- Facilitator's Guide Template
- Facilitator's Slides
- (found in the Resource Section of the website)

## **Addendum: Virtual Facilitation**

As a *Justice Talking* facilitator, your role is to select content that will ground discussion in the humanities, lead participants through a reflective conversation, and ask the right questions to provoke participants to think more deeply about their own experiences and those being shared. You are not expected to analyze the piece or convince participants of its meaning. Instead, your goals are to allow the content to do the work, listen actively to participants, and make sure everyone in the room feels heard. In a virtual setting, your goals are the same but the tools and framework for participation will be different. Outlined here are tested methods for planning and facilitating a virtual session.



# Virtual platform instructions and recommendations

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## Choosing a virtual platform

In preparation of your session, is it important to become familiar with the platform you choose to host a discussion. You have now experienced how a *Justice Talking* session is facilitated through Zoom after participating in the facilitator training, and that may be your cohort's preference. There are also other platforms available, such as Google Meet, Skype, and Microsoft Teams, that have similar capabilities and would work just as well for virtual conversation. However, Zoom's security features, accessibility, and free or low cost make it a widely preferred option.

Key to choosing a platform is to make sure your cohort is comfortable with the technology. If they have agreed upon the use of one platform for other meetings, it is recommended that you maintain consistency and use the same platform for *Justice Talking*. If not, send out a message or poll to find out which platform is preferred by most. If there are people who have never used such platforms or are unfamiliar with the one chosen by the group, send out very clear instructions about how to download the application—if necessary—how to sign up and log in once a meeting invitation is sent, and so on. You may find that it would be appropriate to schedule a walk through or platform tutorial prior to your first session to make sure everyone is prepared. Taking these extra steps before a *Justice Talking* session will increase the chance of its success and limit day-of trouble shooting.

## You're the host

As you plan your *Justice Talking* schedule for the upcoming year and have identified your group's preferred platform, be sure to familiarize yourself with its backend and meeting capabilities. For example, Zoom requires you to turn on and off certain settings each time you schedule a meeting and send out a meeting invitation. These include things such as requiring a meeting password, allowing attendees to enter the meeting directly or be placed in a waiting room until the host lets them in, assigning a co-host, allowing multiple people to share their screens, and turning off automatic recording. Other platforms have varying capabilities and settings, however, the tools described in this toolkit can be found across applications.

## Tips when scheduling a session:

- Turn off automatic recording and limit attendees' access to record on the platform. *Justice Talking* discussions can delve into sensitive topics as participants share personal thoughts and reflections. In order to create a space for open conversations and a feeling of safety, no *Justice Talking* session should be recorded by the facilitator or by participants.
- Limit screen sharing capability to the co-facilitators. To limit confusion and interruptions, do not allow participants to have screen sharing capabilities. This will ensure that you can maintain control of your session.
- Set a meeting password and provide it clearly in the session's invitation. Setting a meeting password will ensure that your session is secure. Make sure your members are aware that the session will require a passcode to enter and include it in your session invitation.
- Assign co-facilitator or co-host capabilities prior to opening the session. Assignment of a co-host is required prior to opening a meeting. Do not wait to see if you have this capability after the meeting has begun.

## Lean on your co-host and co-facilitator

Assign someone—whether it is your supervisor or a member of your cohort—as your *Justice Talking* co-facilitator and co-host prior to any session. Virtual discussions can be tricky to manage alone if people begin experiencing technical issues or if participants are submitting many responses in the chat at one time. A co-facilitator can respond to your cohort's technical challenges and chat responses while you focus your attention on the discussion.

## Responsibilities of a co-facilitator:

- Let people into the meeting. As you are preparing for your session, allow your co-facilitator to manage people as they begin to join your virtual meeting. They should always have their eyes on the waiting room in case someone happens to join after the session has started or faced technical issues that required them to leave the meeting for a short period and rejoin later.
- Trouble shoot technical issues through the chat box. Ask your members to submit any technical issues they may experience, such as audio or visual issues, through the chat box and allow your co-facilitator to respond.
- Monitor member responses as they are being submitting through the chat function. As participants respond to questions, you may find as the facilitator that the chat becomes overwhelming. Ask your co-facilitator to point out any pressing questions you may have missed or a significant response that may have been overlooked.

# Tools and methods for virtual facilitation

## Virtual participation

The traditional *Justice Talking* facilitation method that asks participants to reflect and respond to content through an open-ended-question framework is the same method that you will use when facilitating a virtual session. You will still prepare and pose a series of pre-formulated and follow-up questions—beginning with observation questions (ex. What’s going on in the text?), moving to interpretation questions (ex. How would you describe the role of the “sign-changer” in the film?), and grounding the conversation through implication questions (ex. What message about service does this text hold for you?). Please refer back to your *Justice Talking* manual to review this framework in more detail.

During a virtual discussion session, the dynamic for discussion among participants and a facilitator change. Responding to questions as you would in person will not happen as naturally through a screen because it is harder to read the room and gauge a collective feeling or response. Therefore, a virtual *Justice Talking* session will rely on an adaption of the traditional facilitation method.

## Key changes:

- Facilitators will prepare a slide deck (see slide template on pages 6–13) that includes a discussion agenda, an icebreaker, session ground rules, the content selection you will be discussing, and your prepared observation, interpretation, and implementation questions.
- Facilitators will provide content selections to participants ahead of virtual sessions, so they have a chance to read, listen, or watch each to be as prepared as they need to be to participate.
- Facilitators will pose pre-formulated questions to participants and they will submit their responses to those questions through the platform’s chat box.
- All participants will be asked to submit a response through the chat to provide the Facilitator with opportunities to prompt discussion.
- Facilitators will utilize chat box responses when opening the floor for discussion. Be sure to allow time when initially opening the discussion for anyone to share a response, if they would like. If the room remains quiet, lean on the submitted responses and use them to get a conversation started. For example, “John, I see you wrote that the poem’s intent was to make the reader feel optimistic, can you speak more to that?” The chat box is as much for your cohort to engage as it is for you as a facilitator to manage a robust discussion.

## Communicating expectations ahead and often

Setting expectations for virtual sessions will help participants feel empowered and open to participating in this new format. It is okay if that means what you share becomes repetitive. Things such as platform instructions, the agenda, reminders to review and have ready content selections, and ground rules should be shared with the session invitation and again as you open your

*Justice Talking* session. Remember that your members should not be surprised when joining your session—they should come to the discussion with aligned expectations.

## Recommended ground rules:

- **Please keep cameras on.** It is more likely that participants will be engaged in the session and discussion when everyone’s face is visible on the screen. However, in this format, some participants may feel more comfortable turning their camera off. Though it is listed as a ground rule, you may find that it is helpful and accommodating to ask if anyone needs an exception ahead of your sessions if it allows them to feel more comfortable with their camera off.
- **The discussion will not be recorded and participants should agree not to share the discussion with people outside your cohort.** This will create a safe space for everyone to freely discuss sensitive topics as participants share personal thoughts and reflections. In order to create a space for open conversations and a feeling of safety, no *Justice Talking* session should be recorded by the facilitator or by participants.
- **Make sure you are in a space where you have privacy and/or feel comfortable participating in a reflective discussion about service.** Participants should be reminded prior to a session to try to make sure they have access to a private room or somewhere they would feel comfortable discussing sensitive topics and their service. They may not want to share so openly if they are in a public space.
- **Please use a computer, if one is available.** If participants do not have access to a computer, try to give them special instructions for using the platform’s application and chat box on their phone.
- **Allow space for everyone to join the conversation.** Ask participants to be respectful of everyone’s voice and therefore allow room for more voices to be heard.
- **Utilize the chat box.** Ask participants to utilize the chat box function in a way that benefits their thinking and ability to participate. Make it clear that everyone should be submitting a response to questions through the chat; however, their response can be as lengthy or short as needed. Responses do not need to come in the form of complete sentences—they can be as simple as one word to get them thinking and inspire a response. They can then choose to offer it during discussion or be prepared for you to ask them to elaborate.
- **Allow time for thinking and the silence that comes with it.** Virtual discussion can be awkward, and it is tempting to fill awkward silence when it is necessary for participants to properly reflect and formulate a response. Make sure your group is aware that silence is a critical part of discussion.
- **Feel free to grab a drink, snack, and try to use the restroom prior to the start of the discussion.** Ask the members to follow this in an effort to limit disruptions and maintain engagement.

## Engaging the room

Typical to any *Justice Talking* session is an opening icebreaker. Usually, this would include going around the room to allow everyone to introduce themselves or respond to a question related to their service. In a virtual meeting, the icebreaker should be used to accomplish initial engagement with participants and allow them to become familiar with the main tool they will be using during their session, the chat box.

### Recommendations:

- **Prepare your icebreaker question ahead of your session.** A good icebreaker in this context is simple and does not require a lengthy written response. Examples include: How do you feel going into today's discussion? What were your favorite things you did last week? What is one thing you accomplished this week?
- **Pose your icebreaker at the beginning of your session prior to sharing any ground rules and ask your cohort to respond through the chat box.** Going through an icebreaker at the very beginning will immediately provide an opportunity for participants to feel engaged and maintain engagement as you walk them through ground rules and instructions.
- Depending on the time available and cohort size, **ask participants to share their response** once everyone has submitted something through the chat box. If your group is large, you might simply thank everyone for participating in the ice breaker and read out a few responses.

## Framing the discussion

Without the ability to provide physical copies of your content selection to your cohort ahead of any session, the facilitator's slide deck can serve as a vessel for participants to refer back to the selection when responding to questions. (See the facilitator's slide template for recommended formatting.) Typical framing of your selection and discussion—giving background, context, author information, and the intention behind your selection—should be included in this format. See the *Justice Talking* Facilitator's Handbook for examples and instructions.

### Make content selection visible:

- **If your selection is a short poem or passage, include it in its entirety on each slide with your posed questions.** This will allow participants the ability to refer back to the piece at any point during their reflection and discussion.
- **If your selection is too long to be included in its entirety on one slide, include quotes or shorter passages that correspond to your posed questions.** In this case, be sure to share your selections with your cohort in advance of your session and recommend that they have it on hand or readily available in a digital format for reference during the session.
- **Film or audio clips should be linked within your presentation and opened in a separate browser window.** Both options are recommended so that you can share your slides with participants following the session, granting them access to those pieces, and to be prepared in case one link fails.

## Planning ahead

The material provided in this toolkit was made available to supply you with everything you need to confidently facilitate a virtual *Justice Talking* session. The facilitator's planning outline and slide deck template provide the framework for you to adapt and plan your session well in advance and practice its flow ahead of time. The better prepared you are to manage the technology, the more energy you can put toward facilitating the discussion and engaging with your cohort.

### Before: Planning the Virtual Discussion

- Select a virtual platform and familiarize yourself with its capabilities.
- Choose co-facilitator.
- Select one or two pieces to ground discussion—read, re-read, and re-read them again.
- Determine the ground rules for participation.
- Prepare your script.
- Plan and practice with your co-facilitator well ahead of time.
- Check-in with your cohort and provide them the meeting invitation, content selection, instructions to join, and ground rules for participation.

### During: Opening and Facilitating the Discussion

- Open your virtual session.
- Welcome everyone with a friendly greeting as they are let in by your co-facilitator and walk through the agenda.
- Icebreaker.
- Reiterate ground rules and instructions for discussion.
- Frame the selection and discussion.
- Allow your cohort to read, watch, listen to, look at the piece you selected.
- Pose your first question, provide time to reflect and respond through the chat box.
- Open the floor for discussion.
- Repeat until time is running out, you finish all prepared questions, or the conversation naturally concludes.
- Conclude the session with final statements, review of the discussion, and thank everyone for their participation.
- Close the session.

### After: Following up

- Record the session in the Facilitation Log.

## Discussion Guide Template

# VIRTUAL JUSTICE TALKING

## PRACTICE DEMONSTRATION

### **SLIDE 1:**

**Graphic on slide:** *Justice Talking and session date.*

**Verbal Script:** Welcome everyone to our *Justice Talking* session. Today, I will walk you through our agenda and some brief instructions before moving on to review the content selections we will be discussing today and then diving in. My co-facilitator today is [name of co-facilitator], and they will be assisting with any technical issues and helping facilitate the conversation. If you begin to experience technical issues, please reach out to [name] through the chat box and they will work with you to fix it. If you unfamiliar with the chat, I will explain how we'll be using it today in just a minute.

# WELCOME

## Discussion Agenda

- › read text alone + together
- › prompt #1 reflect, respond, + discuss
- › prompt #2 reflect, respond, + discuss
- › prompt #3 reflect, respond, + discuss
- › wrap-up

VIRTUAL JUSTICE TALKING

# ICEBREAKER

### SLIDE 2

**Graphic on slide:** *Discussion Agenda and icebreaker.*

**Verbal Script:** For anyone who hasn't done *Justice Talking* before, it is a program for Ohio AmeriCorps members that encourages reflection on service. During these sessions we use literature or videos to invite multiple perspectives on a topic and share frank conversations on values, justice, and civic engagement.

This practice of reflection is designed to help us make sense of and appreciate the work we do together. Of course, we wish we could be doing this in person, but it possible to have these conversations virtually, which is what we will be doing today. This means conversation is going to look a little bit different than past in-person discussions.

Here you'll see laid out in our discussion agenda that we will be using [type of selection, such as a poem, a short video, an audio clip, etc.] for our discussion today. The piece is made available in later slides, so we will use the slides to [read, watch, or listen, and reflect on it] silently and then do so once again all together. Once we've considered the content for a minute, we will be

using prompts or questions to reflect on your reactions to the piece. Respond to the prompts using the chat box which you should have access to at the bottom toolbar of your screen -- we'll talk about how to use the chat box in a second -- and then finally we'll use your responses in the chat box to start discussing together your thoughts and reactions. This discussion should last no longer than about [60-90 minutes depending on the size of your group or the number of pieces and questions selected].

### **Chat Box, Icebreaker & Introductions**

**Verbal Script:** Before we get started, I want everyone to quickly click on the chat box button at the bottom of the screen. Now you should see a window on the right-hand side of your screen where you can submit a comment. [Share your icebreaker question.] Once everyone has done that we will do a very quick round of introductions just in case everyone doesn't know each other, and everyone can briefly say their response along with their name.

Thank you all for sharing. We are going to now jump in.

# GROUND RULES

- › please keep cameras on
- › allow space for everyone to join the conversation
- › utilize the chatbox
- › allow time for thinking and the silence that comes with it

VIRTUAL JUSTICE TALKING

## SLIDE 3

**Graphic on slide:** *Ground Rules – List.*

**Verbal Script:** Describe the ground rules you have chosen.

# THE BUDDHA'S LAST INSTRUCTION

"Make of yourself a light," said the Buddha,  
before he died.

I think of this every morning  
as the east begins  
to tear off its many clouds  
of darkness, to send up the first  
signal – a white fan  
streaked with pink and violet,  
even green.

An old man, he lay down  
between two sala trees  
and he might have said anything,  
knowing it was his final hour.  
The light burns upward,  
it thickens and settles over the fields.  
Around him, the villagers gathered

and stretched forward to listen.

Even before the sun itself  
hangs, disattached, in the blue air,  
I am touched everywhere  
by its ocean of yellow waves.  
No doubt he thought of everything  
that had happened in his difficult life.

And then I feel the sun itself  
as it blazes over the hills,  
like a million flowers on fire –  
clearly I'm not needed,  
yet I feel myself turning  
into something of inexplicable value.  
Slowly, beneath the branches,  
he raised his head.

He looked into the faces of that frightened  
crowd.

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VIRTUAL JUSTICE TALKING

## SLIDE 4

**Graphic on slide:** Title of the selection. Here you may choose to provide a link to video, or type out all or portions of the text you have chosen for the discussion.

**Verbal Script:** Today I would like to have a conversation about [themes of the selection]. I've chosen a [selection type] that I think can help us to have this conversation and help to reflect on your work.

**Note:** Repeat the selection title, description, background, and context. This information is found in the Justice Talking Content and Facilitation Notes.

So now what I'll have everyone do is take a minute to [read, watch, listen, reflect] on your own. **Once you're done, we will do so once again all together and then transition into our questions.**

**Note:** If the selection is a short text, ask if anyone would like to volunteer to read it aloud to the group.

## What from the piece stood out to you?

"Make of yourself a light," said the Buddha,  
before he died.

I think of this every morning  
as the east begins  
to tear off its many clouds  
of darkness, to send up the first  
signal – a white fan  
streaked with pink and violet,  
even green.

An old man, he lay down  
between two sala trees,  
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VIRTUAL JUSTICE TALKING

### SLIDE 5

**Graphic on slide:** *[Observation Question]*.

**Verbal Script:** Now using the chat, you'll have a minute or two to submit your reaction to this question.

- Would anyone like to share their response?
- [Select a response] [Name], can you speak more to that?

## Why do you think Buddah left this as his last instruction?

"Make of yourself a light," said the Buddha, before he died.

I think of this every morning  
as the east begins  
to tear off its many clouds  
of darkness, to send up the first  
signal – a white fan  
streaked with pink and violet,  
even green.

An old man, he lay down  
between two sala trees,  
and he might have said anything,  
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### SLIDE 6

**Graphic on slide:** *[Interpretation Question].*

**Verbal Script:** Using the chat again, you'll have a minute or two to submit your reaction to this question.

- Would anyone like to share their response?
- [Select a response] [Name], can you share more about your comment?

**Note:** *Depending on how long you planned for your discussion, you might use multiple copies of Slide 6, each one outlining a different interpretation question.*

## How does this piece help you reflect on your own service experience?

"Make of yourself a light," said the Buddha, before he died.

I think of this every morning as the east begins to tear off its many clouds of darkness, to send up the first signal – a white fan streaked with pink and violet, even green.

An old man, he lay down between two sala trees, and he might have said anything, knowing it was his final hour. The light burns upward, it thickens and settles over the fields. Around him, the villagers gathered

and stretched forward to listen.

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And then I feel the sun itself as it blazes over the hills, like a million flowers on fire – clearly I'm not needed, yet I feel myself turning into something of inexplicable value. Slowly, beneath the branches, he raised his head.

He looked into the faces of that frightened crowd.

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### SLIDE 7

**Graphic on slide:** *[Implication Question].*

**Verbal Script:** For our final question, you'll have a minute or two to submit your reaction to this question.

- Would anyone like to share their response?
- [Select a response] [Name], can you speak expand on your idea?



**THANK YOU!**  
> wrap-up

VIRTUAL JUSTICE TALKING

**SLIDE 8**

**Graphic on slide:** *Thank You!*

**Verbal Script:** Close the discussion by summarizing key points, making connections, and/or evaluating the session.

Thank the group for their participation.



**Ohio Humanities** is the state-based partner of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Through grants and sponsored programs we help Ohioans interpret the past, imagine the future, and define individual values. We're committed to creating vibrant communities throughout our state. Discover more about Ohio Humanities at [www.ohiohumanities.org](http://www.ohiohumanities.org).

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Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism

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