We know this year is different, and what an experience it has been.

A global pandemic has radically shifted our way of life and taken one million people worldwide. The 2020 election arrives as political polarization reaches heights unseen in decades. Environmental norms are in a state of change, bringing extreme weather events and potentiating disaster. Many Americans have taken to the streets to demand racial justice, and this movement continues in the public and private sectors.

To experience 2020 is to witness a profound and watershed moment in history.

In this activity, we invite you to share a conversation about your 2020 experience. Be sure to choose a discussion partner whom you feel you can have a safe conversation. Then, take 40 minutes to speak courageously about the things that matter to you -- and to listen to your partner’s thoughts and feelings, too.

**Suggested Pairings:**

Invite a colleague, friend, or loved one to the interview. We encourage intergenerational pairings because they often result in powerful moments of awakening and understanding. Conversations with peers can be equally impactful, and provide a forum to reflect on shared experiences. Regardless of your conversation partner, the most crucial element is your natural curiosity and a willingness to listen.

Here are a few suggestions for who to invite to your interview:

- Two Wellesley students sharing memorable moments from the year, describing the impact it’s had on their lives, discussing what it means to them, and speaking to their hopes and expectations for how this year’s events will shape the future.

- A person who lived through the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, or 1980s sharing their experience from those eras, as relates to the themes of the pandemic, the election, environmental changes, and the movement for racial justice.

- A person who participates in a student-led activist organization, discussing why and how they choose to organize.

- A student or faculty member studying topics related to the pandemic, the election, the environment, and racial justice, describing their experience of studying this moment from an academic or scientific perspective.
Overview of the interview process:

1. Choose a person in your life with whom you’d like to share a reflective discussion on the topic.

2. Compose a set of 10 questions to ask your conversation partner. See below for suggestions, check out StoryCorps list of great questions and feel free to write your own.

3. Familiarize yourself with StoryCorps Connect.

4. Agree on a time when you will virtually meet for your conversation, then conduct your interview.

5. When filling out your post-interview information form, tag the interview with the keyword “Tanner 2020.”

6. Share your interview with friends and family or on social media.

Great Questions to Guide Your Conversation:

Choose your favorite questions from the list below, or use them as inspiration to write your own.

Checking In and Getting Started

● Before we start, I want to be sure that you feel safe in this conversation. How do you feel, and is there anything I can do to make you feel safer?

● Is there anything you feel uncomfortable talking about? We can stop at any time, and you don’t have to talk about anything you don’t want to.

On the pandemic:

● When did you first realize the pandemic would radically change the world and/or your way of life?

● Has the pandemic had any profound impact on your life?

● Do any moments stick out in your memory as “peak pandemic”?

● Has this moment taught you anything about yourself or the world at large? Do you expect it to leave a lasting impact on you? If so, I’d love to hear about it.

● Is there anything you’d like to forget about life during the pandemic?

● Do you have any plans for when the pandemic ends?
On the 2020 election:
- Do you feel this election is different from others you’ve experienced? If so, how?
- Many people - Americans and non-Americans - consider the stakes of this election to be especially high. Do you agree? What do you consider “the stakes” to be?
- Are you engaged in any form of voter activism? I’d be interested to hear about your reasons why or why not.
- Do you have any expectations, hopes, or anxieties with respect to November 3rd? If so, I’d love to hear about them.

On environmental changes:
- Was there a moment of impact for you when you realized environmental change would be an important issue in your life -- a moment when it “became real”?
- Is environmental change an important issue for you? Why or why not?
- Has environmental change already impacted your life in any way -- from minute to massive? Do you expect to experience changes within the span of your lifetime?
- Do you have any expectations, hopes, or anxieties with respect to environmental change? If so, I’d love to hear about them.

On the movement for racial justice:
- Are you able to speak to your own journey in reflecting on racism? I wonder if there was a particular moment when you became aware of racism, and what that was like for you; or if there were other important points in that path. This may be a very personal deliberation, but if you’re comfortable I’d love to listen.
- What were your thoughts and feelings as you watched or took part in the Black Lives Matter demonstrations of 2020?
- What does “racial justice” mean to you, and what would it look like? What do you hope to see?
- Do you consider yourself a change-maker or activist in today’s society? If so, what changes do you hope to help enact?
- Are you proud of any contributions your/our generation made or is making to racial and social justice in America? Can you tell me about it?
General questions:

- Is there any message you’d like to send to the world about this moment, or any of these issues?
- What lesson(s) do you hope I take from this moment? What lesson(s) do you hope our country can take from this moment?
- In this particular historical moment, has anything surprised you, interested you, or caused you to want to learn more?
- Do you feel like your perspective on the world has changed in any way during this moment? If so, in what ways?

Checklist for Your Interview

- Choose a person in your life with whom you’d like to share a reflective discussion.
- If you don’t already have one, create an account at archive.storycorps.org.
- Prepare your questions in advance: write down or print a copy of questions you’d like to ask. Most participants are able to get through about six questions during a 40-minute interview. Be prepared to go off script and ask follow-up questions!
- Familiarize yourself with StoryCorps Connect by navigating to storycorpsconnect.org.
- Invite your partner to record on StoryCorps Connect. Share a private link to your recording session. *Pro tip: You’ll need a login to start.*
- Begin the interview by introducing yourself and your partner. State the location, date, and year when you are conducting the interview. *Example: My name is Abraham Lincoln. Today is June 19, 2020 and I am talking with my friend Frederick Douglass.*
- After you record, enter your summary, title, and keywords. Don’t forget to use the keyword “Tanner 2020”.
- Thank your partner for sharing their story with you. Share your interview with friends and family. If you share on social media, tag “#Tanner2020”, @Wellesley (on Twitter), @WellesleyCollege (on Instagram) and @StoryCorps.

What is StoryCorps?

Founded in 2003, StoryCorps has given people of all backgrounds and beliefs, in thousands of towns and cities in all 50 states, the chance to record interviews about their lives. We preserve the recordings in our archive at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. Today, it is the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered.