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READER GUIDE

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Migration, Politics, and the Limits of Multiculturalism in a Turkish Museum

Irina Levin

Reader Guide by:
Braden Paynter

With contributions by:
The MER Editorial Team

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Issues of immigration, migration, and identity are impacting communities across the globe and are at the forefront of decision making about politics, culture, and individual and collective futures. With the unchecked growth of climate change and the current rise of authoritarian governments, these issues are only likely to increase in their frequency and impact around the world.

It is in this context that we chose this month's reader article "Migration, Politics, and the Limits of Multiculturalism in a Turkish Museum" by Irina Levin. Levin's close look at the Bursa Immigration History Museum in Bursa, Turkey provides a mirror both to that community and institutions facing similar issues in their own home communities. This insightful look helps us see the complexities of different definitions, the ways that nation, state, culture, race, religion, and power all intersect differently with identity, how national politics can influence local history, and the challenges for museums being the holders and speakers of culture. While it does not provide a concrete set of answers, the article does lead readers to a set of questions and perspectives that can be used to examine their own practice.

Below are a set of questions that use this article as a launching point for a wider discussion of these issues in our personal, professional, and institutional lives. The lines between personal and professional lives are not always hard, and these topics can be powerful ones for discussants. We encourage groups to agree to a set of ground rules and to treat each other with care as they share and learn from each other.

There is no expectation that any conversation will use all of the questions below. Rather, they are guides for the many possible conversations that could be had based on this article. They are grouped following the Arc of Dialogue (developed by Tammy Bormann and David Camp) beginning with introductory questions, moving towards larger and often harder questions, and then returning to individual action. You should select the questions (or create your own) that are best for your group and its conversations. If you want to know more about the Arc or dialogue facilitation please contact Braden Paynter (bpaynter@sitesofconscience.org).

(continued)

Phase 1: Community Building

Questions in this section help build the discussion community by allowing participants to share information about themselves.

- Where do you consider yourself a local? Where do others consider you a local?
- What identities are part of being "local" where you are? What are the identities of being non-local?
- Word choice matters with issues of immigration: "Immigrant, migrant, refugee, ex-pat, illegal, undocumented, etc." What terms do you/ your institution use, and why?

Phase 2: Sharing Our Experiences

Questions in this section help participants recognize how their experiences are alike and different and why.

- Word choice also matters in talking about goals of immigration. Melting pot, homeland, mosaic, salad bowl. All convey different visions of migration, assimilation, and the relationships between people. What terms do you use?
- How does the idea of "insider" and "outsider" affect your community? Your work/institution?
- The author discusses how current events and politics put pressure on the stories told at museums. How are current events shaping your work?
- Where have you seen good examples of museums showing the complexities of culture?
- Cultures are defined both by their norms and the attempt to break those norms? How do you incorporate norm breakers into your work about cultures?
- What stories of group identity does your work/institution reinforce? Which ones does it challenge?
- Who is made visible at your institution? Who invisible?

Phase 3: Exploring Beyond Our Experience

Questions in this section help participants engage in inquiry and exploration about the article topic in an effort to learn with and from one another.

- Can a museum be an authoritative source on a subject that changes as rapidly as immigration?
- How should an institution decide what the core tenets of a culture are to share?
- When are some migration stories able to stand in for the larger migration experience? And when can they obscure the differences of migration experiences?
- The museum seems effective at building limited empathy, empathy for some groups, but not others. Can we build empathy that expands beyond the identities of those in the initial story?
- How does understanding people in terms of their nationality or place of origin help us to understand them? How does it obscure or mislead us?

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Phase 4: Synthesizing the Article and Moving Forward

Questions in this section help the group to reflect on the dialogue and what has been learned from the article.

- How do you want to adjust your own cultural cartography?
- What do you want to learn more about?