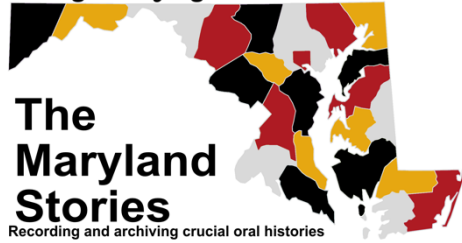# Maryland COVID-19 Oral History Participant FAQ

Why are Marylanders being invited to record their stories?

We live in highly unique times, one of historical proportions. COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of almost every human being on the planet. As this is indeed an historic event, it is important to document the stories of those impacted by the pandemic. Story telling is known to be an incredibly powerful and valuable tool. Through this project, we invite all Marylanders to use the gear provided to record their personal stories, letting the world know how COVID has impacted their lives – past, present, and future. This project provides Marylanders a unique, rare, and incredibly valuable opportunity to have their voices and stories heard, recorded, and archived for the benefit of all of mankind.

Who is running the project?

"*Living and Dying with COVID-19: The Maryland Stories*," is a project conceptualized and managed by a Maryland-based nonprofit organization called, *The Global Z Recording Project*. The project is funded by a grant from *Maryland Humanities*. Project collaborators include *Maryland State Library*, *Digital Maryland*, the *Maryland State Archives*, and *National Public Radio* station *WYPR*.

Who can record their stories?

Any resident of Maryland 18 years or older can contribute their story to the project. Minors may also record their stories as long as they are accompanied by a parent or legal guardian who may sign a participation agreement which gives the minor permission to participate.

Are all libraries in Maryland participating?

Approximately 15 library branches across the state of Maryland are participating in the project. Contact your local library to see if they are a participant. You may also discover which libraries are participating by reviewing *The Global Z Recording Project's* website, at www.globalzrecording.org

What should I talk about?

The pandemic has impacted lives in numerous ways – socially, family life, community, health, artistically, professionally, psychologically, economically, spiritually, academically, technologically, politically, and more. We want you to tell us what stands out in your mind.

How has the pandemic had an impact on your life? Everyone has a story to tell and we want to hear yours.

How do I prepare to tell my story?

While some people have great recall and the gift of being able to tell powerful stories off the top of their heads, most of us would do well to prepare in advance for the stories we wish to record. You may wish to jot down in outline fashion or in bullet format some key topics and highlights of stories you want to record and bring them in with you on note cards, paper, or on a mobile device. You might try practicing your stories by recording on a mobile device or computer so you can hear how it sounds before you arrive at the library.

What rights do I grant The Global Z Recording Project when I elect to record my stories?

Before you record your story, you must read and accept terms defined on a participation agreement. When you record your story, you retain the copyright of your submission, and you are agreeing to let *The Global Z Recording Project* and their collaborating partners, *Digital Maryland*, and the *Maryland State Archives*, add the files to their collections for use by the general public. You are also agreeing to allow *National Public Radio (NPR)* to possibly distribute your story and edit the recording for possible air play on *NPR*.

What steps do I need to take to participate?

Once you have decided what stories you want to record, contact your local participating library to reserve a date and time when you can record your story. Bring any notes of what you want to say with you. Once you arrive at the library, a staff member will ask to see a form of ID (state or federal ID, library card), and request you fill out and sign a participation agreement form. They will then escort you to a room where the audio production equipment is setup, provide a general overview of the recording equipment, and start the recording process. When you have finished recording, ask the library staff to stop the recording. They will save the file on a secure and private server space. Please use hand sanitizer or wash your hands once you have finished recording your stories.

Can I record my story anonymously?

You are required to provide proof of identity (state or federal ID, library card), your name and contact information in order to participate. This information will be listed on a participation agreement form. Only your name and town or city of residence will be associated with the recorded file. Other contact or personally identifiable information will only be used in an administrative capacity with our project collaborating partners. When you record your audio, you may opt not to mention your name. However, as part of the *Digital Maryland* and *Maryland State Archives* collections, your name and location will become part of the digital file's retrievable data.

How do I use the audio recording equipment?

Participating library staff members will be trained how to use the audio production equipment. They will be available to assist you in understanding how to use the equipment and help you get started with recording your story.

Is there a time limit for telling my story?

Some people can record what they have to say in a matter of minutes. The maximum time available to tell your story is 45 minutes. Feel free to spend as much time as you need telling your story, as long as it takes less than the maximum allotted time.

Any tips on how to make a good recording?

Position your mouth approximately 8" from the microphone. Try your best to maintain the same volume of voice throughout the recording. Do not bump the table, desk, microphone, or microphone stand while recording as this will record an unwanted 'thumping' sound. Point your mouth toward a small red dot on the microphone to get the best quality recording.

Is it safe for me to record my story using this equipment?

Patron safety is of paramount concern to us and our partners. While there is some inherent risk associated with participating in the project, we are taking precautions to mitigate the chance of the transfer of germs to participating patrons. A fresh plastic bag is placed over the microphone between participants. Also, we highly encourage participants to use the provided hand sanitizer or wash their hands when they leave the recording space. In addition, we discourage patrons from touching any of the provided equipment. Library staff will assist you with positioning the microphone so your mouth is within the recommended 8" distance to the mic. Please do not touch any of the equipment before, during, or after the recording process. Library support staff will assist you with any equipment-related concerns.

Will my story definitely make it into the collection?

The oral history project is designed to gather as many stories as possible about the pandemic and how COVID-19 has impacted Marylanders. *The Global Z Recording Project* reserves the right not to include a recording in the project or partnering collections if it does not meet technical requirements or does not address the intent of the project.

What happens if I make an error in my recording?

Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to dedicate toward making edits to all participant's recordings. These stories are not intended or designed to be polished productions. They are real people telling real stories. If you make an error while recording, do your best to recover from the error and move forward.

Will my recording be edited?

The only instance where your audio file may be edited is to trim unnecessary audio before and after the main content of your story. The file may be digitally altered slightly to achieve a technically superior recording, but your stories hosted by *Digital Maryland* and the *Maryland State Archives* will not be edited. Stories selected to air on *National Public Radio* may be edited in order to fit the time allotted for *NPR* programming.

Can I get a copy of my recording?

Unfortunately, we do not have the resources to dedicate toward making copies of participants' recordings. If you wish to have a copy of your recorded story, we recommend you simultaneously record yourself with a mobile phone while you are recording your story at the library. You might even try recording a run through of your story before you visit the library using your mobile recording device. Doing so allows you to get an idea of how your story sounds. Upon playback, you may decide to add or omit parts of what you will capture in the final version of the story.

When will my recording be available to the public?

There are a number of steps that need to occur between the time you save your recording and when it is ready to be accessed as part of *Digital Maryland* collection or the *Maryland State Archives*. Files need to be trimmed, processed for audio clarity, formatted, and a number of cataloguing processes need to be completed. As such, it will take some time before all recordings have been fully processed and made available to the public. As multiple partners are involved, at this time we are unable to provide a timeframe for these processes to occur.

How long will The Global Z Project be collecting these oral histories?

Our audio production equipment will be in place and available to patrons to record their stories for a period of one year. Please contact your local participating library or check out our website to get the latest information on when the project will begin and end.

Who can I contact regarding additional questions?

For questions about library-specific issues, please contact the participating library branch closest near you. For other project-related questions, please contact *The Global Z Recording Project* at globalzrecording@gmail.com