

tell my story to them, they kind of held on to some of that as they moved on with their lives and that they would either share that with a phone call by my office or they would actually let me know that they had children who are coming to PVCC and they wanted me to look out for them,” said Robinson.

Robinson does not regret his choice to retire, but it was a tough decision. While he still plans on teaching at PVCC as an adjunct faculty member, Robinson immediately knew what he would miss the most about teaching full-time at

PVCC. “I’ll miss everyday interaction with, again, each individual student, because when I go into the classroom after three or four weeks I’ve become familiar with the goings on of each individual student. Whether they’re really quiet, or whether they are talkative, whether they have a lot of questions, whether they need additional help,” said Robinson.

Undoubtedly the PVCC community will miss Robinson, too. “Bruce didn’t just talk about education, empowerment, and social change. He lived it,” said Lerman.

Bridging the Political Divide with Dialogue

Ginger Hood, assistant editor

On March 24, a diverse assortment of faculty members and students gathered on Zoom for PVCC’s Deliberative Dialogue, “A House Divided,” as part of PVCC’s recent Civic Engagement Conference. The National Issues Forums Institute (NIFI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that publishes issue guides for deliberative dialogues. NIFI defines “deliberation” in the context of these dialogues as, “a process of thoughtfully weighing options ... an unbiased kind of talking that starts where the problem starts—with your experience of it. It’s not a bunch of abstract backroom negotiations, but real, genuine, human struggles of which we are a part.”

This is what a deliberative dialogue is hoping to achieve. Attendees’ reasons for participating ranged from those planning to go into politics as a career to those who simply wanted to learn more about different perspectives. Participants were sorted into two Zoom breakout rooms to make it easier for everyone to get a chance to talk, as a deliberative dialogue is designed to encourage talking; though, as co-host of the dialogue and PVCC English Professor Jennifer Koster said, “Listening is as important as speaking.”

Even with the emphasis on listening, there was hardly a silent moment, though there were no arguments or raised voices. Questions were encouraged and answered kindly, clashing opinions were mutually considered, and multiple points of view were presented on each proposed solution to the issue.

“We all learned about seeing different points of view. A lot of things came up that I hadn’t

thought of,” said Paula Morales, a student who attended the dialogue.

The dialogue’s topic of deliberation was “A House Divided: What Would We Have to Give Up to Get the Political System We Want,” and the dialogue focused heavily on how to fix the inflammatory rhetoric that saturates America’s current political system. There were three proposed solutions to this issue, with each solution given its own list of upsides and drawbacks. Solutions included adding more moderation to online spaces, making news organizations give equal amounts of time to different candidates and parties, and giving more power to local governments to make laws as they see fit for their individual citizens. The dialogue overall lasted approximately an hour and a half, with each proposed solution given an approximately equal amount of time.

When the time for deliberation was up, participants were once again ushered into the main meeting room. There was time for closing thoughts, so the note takers for each group and many of the respective group’s participants shared their comments, compliments, and conclusions. While the conclusions were not the most solid, there was a general agreement that it was a positive experience for the participants, and it opened, and even changed, some people’s minds. Koster agreed with this sentiment, saying “learning more about how others think is one of the most interesting parts of a forum.”

For those interested in learning more about deliberative dialogue, the National Issues Forums Institute’s website has a variety of resources. For more information on this deliberative dialogue issue, visit the issue guide page.