

# EMBRACE » LA

BE A PART OF THE CONVERSATION

[www.embracela.org](http://www.embracela.org)

EMBRACE » LA

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**UNIFYING ANGELENOS AND  
EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH CITYWIDE  
CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE  
AND RACISM TO CHALLENGE  
AND CHANGE INEQUITIES.**

**EMBRACE » LA**

A stylized, colorful illustration of a city skyline with various skyscrapers in shades of blue, orange, and purple, positioned at the bottom of the page.



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## EMBRACE»LA

|  |    |
|--|----|
| About <b>embRACE LA</b>                                | 4  |
| Our <b>Story</b>                                       | 4  |
| Our <b>Purpose</b>                                     | 5  |
| Our <b>Future</b>                                      | 5  |
| Why <b>Here?</b> Why <b>Now</b>                        | 6  |
| The <b>Method:</b> Why <b>Conversations</b>            | 8  |
| Personal <b>Assesment Tools</b>                        | 11 |
| Facilitator Personal <b>Assesment Chart</b>            | 12 |
| Implicit <b>Association Test</b>                       | 12 |
| Facilitation <b>Tips</b>                               | 13 |
| Facilitation <b>Guidelines</b>                         | 14 |
| Tips For Engaging With <b>Challenging Participants</b> | 15 |
| Sample <b>Conversation Guide</b>                       | 17 |
| Land <b>Acknowledgement</b>                            | 18 |
| Conversation <b>Outline</b>                            | 20 |
| Digital Best Practices + <b>Sharable Assets</b>        | 22 |
| EmbRACE LA <b>Partners</b>                             | 23 |
| <b>Connect Us</b>                                      | 24 |





## Our **Story**

Launched in the fall of 2016 by Los Angeles City Council President Herb Wesson and Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, the goal of embRACE LA is to challenge and change biases and inequities within ourselves, our neighborhoods and our local city government.

In 2018, the Los Angeles City Council partnered with the Community Coalition, Revolve Impact and The Todd Group in making history by successfully training over 40 facilitators and organizing over 130 free dinners in homes and community-based organizations throughout the City of Los Angeles. The result was hundreds of authentic and honest conversations with over 1,200 residents in each of the fifteen City Council Districts, each driven by our core principal: we cannot heal what we will not face.

## Our **Purpose**

The purpose of embRACE LA is to foster understanding, healing and growth throughout Los Angeles by building authentic relationships, changing existing narratives and advancing public policy solutions. Through a wide-variety of programs and strategies, embRACE LA is an unprecedented partnership between government, organizations and residents.



## Our **Future**

Throughout 2019 and beyond, embRACE LA will continue working to improve the conditions of Angelinos most at risk of inequities in our city, utilizing meaningful conversations, campaign building and equity policy advancement.

# » WHY HERE? WHY NOW?

## Why **Here?**

**Los Angeles is one of the most diverse and vibrant cities in the United States.** Los Angeles County (LA) is the most populous county in the nation, spanning over 4,000 square miles that encompass 88 incorporated cities and unincorporated areas. LA is home to over 10 million people from over 140 cultures that speak 224 different languages. The City of Los Angeles is the most populous city within LA County with over 4 million people.

In 2015, US Census data estimates the population is by percentage 48.4 Hispanic, 26.6 white non-Hispanic, 15 Asian-Pacific Islander, 9.1 Black, and 1.5 Native American. Over 30% of residents are foreign born. Over half speak a language other than English at home. One of five residents is under 18. Close to 17% (over 1.7 million people) live in poverty.

According to Kidsdata.org, over 80% of children under 18 are children of color, and the child poverty rate is close to 30%, according to the Public Policy Institute of California. PolicyLink's Equity Profile of Los Angeles reports that nearly a quarter of LA's African Americans and Latinos live below the poverty level, compared with one in ten Whites. Latinos are much more likely to be working poor than all other groups. By 2020, 44% of the state's jobs will require an associate's degree or higher, but only 10% of Latino immigrants, 28% of U.S.-born Latinos, and 34% of Blacks and Native Americans have reached that level of education.

## Why **Now?**

**The beliefs we hold about race and racism have the power to both unite and fracture us.** Diversity is our city's greatest strength, yet to ignore divisions would be a disservice to all Angelenos. embRACE LA aims to improve race relations, build stronger communities and develop transformative social, political and economic policies for Los Angeles. Through embRACE LA, residents from all across the city have shown the courage to dialogue with their neighbors, and oftentimes complete strangers, to better understand how race and racism directly shape and impact our lives.



## » THE CONTEXT: WHY ADDRESS RACE

**While L.A. is one of the most diverse and vibrant cities in the U.S.** its Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color experience large inequities. For example, the Black and Latino poverty rate is near triple that of White Angelenos. The racial inequities that exist in Los Angeles are not accidental – they are the result of biased and discriminatory government decisions, policies, and practices. These government policies and practices helped to determine where people could live, who could own property, who could vote, and who had access to services.



In many instances, government decisions excluded certain communities and populations and resulted in an inequitable distribution of opportunity. These inequities have then been maintained by the systems and structures established and maintained by government. If government played a role in creating and maintaining the racial inequities that Los Angeles sees today it must play a role in eliminating them.

## » THE METHOD: WHY CONVERSATIONS

Research supports that meaningful conversations, community-based involvement, and volunteering have the power to help people build a sense of purpose, transform their negative biases, feel less isolated and develop authentic relationships. This embRACE conversation toolkit aims to develop authentic relationships and change by connecting people with each other and community-based organizations.

We, as a country and as a world, are experiencing an “epidemic of mass loneliness.” According to Harvard University’s 75-year study is that the #1 key habit for making people happier (and less lonely) is having good relationships. The study tells us that “good relationships keep us happier and healthier. Period.”

However, 40 percent of Americans say they “sometimes or always feel their social relationships are not meaningful.” 20 percent describe themselves as, “lonely or socially isolated.” From a pure physical health perspective, researchers say loneliness is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day. According to a 2018 survey by Cigna, only about 50% of Americans have “meaningful in-person social interactions” on a daily basis -- and the numbers are worse for Generation Z. Research supports that meaningful conversations and community-based involvement and volunteering have the power to help people build a sense of purpose, transform their negative biases, feel less isolated and develop authentic relationships. This embRACE conversation toolkit aims to develop authentic relationships and change by connecting people with each other and community based organizations.





## » HOW IT WORKS

EmBRACE LA is modeled after a number of successful conversation initiatives. While we do provide some direction, the magic of emBRACE LA is in the unexpected. Below are some suggested tips on conversation set up, inviting attendees and ground rules:

In terms of location set up, emBRACE LA conversations can happen anywhere. From an office at your workplace to your home to a community center to your backyard. We have found homes to work well because of their quieter and more intimate nature.

### Conversation Size

Utilize the facilitation personal assessment tools to gauge your comfort level in leading a conversation. Maybe start with people you know, or reach outside of your comfort zone and ask participants to invite one of their colleagues, neighbors, friends, etc. We find that healthy but intimate conversation sizes tend to be 8 to 12 people.

### Inviting Attendees

Once you select a date, send an email inviting guests that includes a link to a digital sign-up sheet for food and drinks. You can also go to **[www.emBRACEla.org](http://www.emBRACEla.org)** for a sample email template in the Resources

### Preparing Attendees

Make sure to remind people of the upcoming conversation with all logistical information (where, when, parking information, etc.) as well as a link to the emBRACE LA website so people could learn more about the initiative. You can also go to **[www.emBRACEla.org](http://www.emBRACEla.org)** for a sample reminder email in the Resources section.

# EMBRACE » LA

**Please take account into some of the following ground rules from the People's Supper:**

**1)**

Make sure to use "I" statements and avoid advice-giving. Your experience is yours and please honor and respect that others' experiences are theirs. Putting this to practice is hard work so simply speak your truth.

**2)**

Pass the mic and allow for silence. Notice that when you're talking more than others. Step back and give other voices a chance to be heard. Try to welcome silence just as much as we welcome speech, and ask only that when you speak, you do so intentionally.

**3)**

What happens in the conversation, stays in the conversation. No quotes or identifying details should be shared without permission.

**4)**

Check yourself on whether you are advocating or attempting to influence others: If you find yourself doing so, stop, breathe, and open up to what is happening around you. Ask questions instead of telling someone what to think.



# PERSONAL ASSESSMENT TOOL:

## FACILITATOR PERSONAL ASSESSMENT CHART

What are some of the personal resources that you bring to the Social Justice framework and those you still need to develop in order to be an effective facilitator?

|   | I feel comfortable with this and can be a resource to others | I have some resources but need more | I do not have this resource |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>PASSION</b>  |  |                                     |                             |
| Energy for this work  |  |                                     |                             |
| Can lead with my heart  |  |                                     |                             |
| Deep personal reason for doing this work                                  |  |                                     |                             |
| Commitment on personal/professional levels                                |  |                                     |                             |
| Can demonstrate compassion  |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to share feelings with others                                     |  |                                     |                             |
| <b>PERSONAL AWARENESS</b>   |  |                                     |                             |
| Clarity about my identity(ies)  |  |                                     |                             |
| Clarity about my values   |  |                                     |                             |
| Internal emotional balance  |  |                                     |                             |
| Secure about my status and privileges                                     |  |                                     |                             |
| Recognize my blinders   |  |                                     |                             |
| Awareness of the impact of my personal style on others                    |  |                                     |                             |
| Awareness of the impact of my social identity group memberships on myself |  |                                     |                             |
| Awareness of the impact of my social identity group memberships on others |  |                                     |                             |
| Awareness of my triggers  |  |                                     |                             |

\* This form is adapted from the "Facilitator Personal Assessment Chart" found in Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community, and Workplace, ; The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor







# PERSONAL ASSESSMENT TOOL:

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|   | I feel comfortable with this and can be a resource to others | I have some resources but need more | I do not have this resource |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>SKILLS</b>   |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to work with people from different groups                                 |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to challenge others   |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to take risks   |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to discuss issues   |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to accept other's leadership  |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to utilize other's support  |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to give and receive feedback  |  |                                     |                             |
| Ability to give and receive feedback  |  |                                     |                             |
| <b>KNOWLEDGE</b>  |  |                                     |                             |
| Knowledge of difference between prejudice, discrimination, and institutional isms |  |                                     |                             |
| Knowledge of my own group(s) culture/history                                      |  |                                     |                             |
| Knowledge of other group(s) culture history                                       |  |                                     |                             |
| Can recognize isms  |  |                                     |                             |
| Knowledge of group process issues   |  |                                     |                             |
| Knowledge of intergroup issues  |  |                                     |                             |
| Knowledge of theories and terminology which inform and guide multicultural work   |  |                                     |                             |

\* This form is adapted from the "Facilitator Personal Assessment Chart" found in *Intergroup Dialogue: Deliberative Democracy in School, College, Community, and Workplace*, ; The University of Michigan Press: Ann Arbor



# OVERALL FACILITATION TIPS

## **1. Encourage and model trust and respect among participants.**

Be aware that everyone is a member in the discourse and has the right to a voice and to be treated with respect. Also, encourage and model openness, honesty, and active listening. Be supportive, acknowledge contributions, and respect each member's way of "being" in the group.

## **2. Balance process and content - the what and how.**

Dialogue is both a process that participants experience and a series of statements, expressions and language that carries information. While we often get wrapped up in WHAT is being said, it is also important to notice how we and the speaker feel at the time and what events lead up to certain statements being shared. Examining both process and content offers multiple learning opportunities.

**3. Be attentive to your feelings - what is happening for you, within you, at any given moment.** Own your own feelings and opinions and share them when appropriate. Seek a sense of balance between being a facilitator and a participant.

## **4. Recognize the limits of your role and of the experience in general.**

You are not responsible for everything that takes place. Encourage participants to take ownership for their own participation and that of their peers.

## **5. Have a sense of how you define your role.**

Where do you stand on issues such as challenging and being supportive, being directive and letting a process unfold, being a facilitator and participant? It may be helpful to not dichotomize these approaches but rather think of them in terms of a continuum.

Artwork by Danny Gonzales



**6. Remember to “set the stage” for the dialogue - be aware of the power of modeling.** This includes setting the tone for the group, working with your cofacilitator, being open and honest, etc. In some ways, you are the catalyst for your group and for the group process.

**7. Feelings will arise during this process and you will have to address them.** When understood as source information, an avenue for growth and development, feelings become an integral part of the dialogue process.

**8. Try to be observant of what is happening in the group and for each participant.** This may be hard. Try to key into what is being said, what is not being said, who is saying certain things, silences, etc. Feel free to ask clarifying questions.

**9. Remember that all of us have multiple identities and they interact with each other.** Keep in mind that you also have multiple identities. Use your own identities and experiences as you facilitate.

**10. Work to avoid making assumptions or inferences based on your own socialization.** Your cofacilitator can help you with this. Share your observations and inferences with your cofacilitator and ask yourselves where these ideas are coming from.

**11. Find a reasonable balance of challenge and support.** Be willing to push participants so that risks can be taken, and support people in this process. Keep in mind your authority in the dialogue as it is perceived by participants and how this impacts the learning environment.

Facilitation Guidelines: Adapted materials from National Conference for Community and Justice





## TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH CHALLENGING PARTICIPANTS

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <b>OVERLY<br/>TALKATIVE</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interrupt with "That's an interesting point... now let's see what the rest of the group thinks."</li><li>• Slow participant down with difficult questions</li></ul>   |
| <b>HIGHLY<br/>ARGUMENTATIVE</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Keep your temper in check</li><li>• Honestly try to find merit in one of their points, express your agreement or get the group to do so, then move on</li><li>• When a misstatement is made, toss it to the group<br/>Talk to the participant privately</li></ul> |
| <b>SIDE<br/>CONVERSATION</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't embarrass them</li><li>• Call one by name - ask them a question, have them restate what was previously stated and their opinion</li></ul>   |
| <b>DIFFICULTY<br/>ARTICULATING</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Don't say "What you mean is..."</li><li>• Say "Let me repeat that" then restate it more clearly<br/>Utilize clarifying and/or paraphrasing</li></ul>  |
| <b>DEFINITELY<br/>WRONG</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Say "That's one way of looking at it."</li><li>• Move on or share another point of view</li></ul>   |
| <b>RAMBLER</b>                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• When they pause, thank them and refocus attention by restating the relevant points and move on</li><li>• State that their point is interesting, however due to time, we need to move on</li><li>• Glance at your watch</li></ul>                                  |



## TIPS FOR ENGAGING WITH CHALLENGING PARTICIPANTS

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <b>PERSONALITY CLASH</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emphasize points of agreement, minimize points of disagreement (if possible)</li><li>• Draw attention to objectives</li><li>• Ask co-facilitator to assist</li></ul>               |
| <b>WON'T BUDGE</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Throw participants view to the group, have group facilitate</li><li>• State that time is short and you can discuss their point in more detail later or after the session</li></ul> |
| <b>WRONG SUBJECT</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State "Something I said must have lead you off subject; this is what we are discussing..."</li><li>• Restate the point and/or objective</li></ul>                                  |
| <b>COMPLAINER</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offer to discuss issue in private</li><li>• Indicate the time factor</li></ul>   |
| <b>WON'T TALK</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask for their opinion</li><li>• Utilize pair-share activities and ask participant to share out to group afterward</li></ul>  |
| <b>VAGUE</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Probe for specific examples, behaviors, etc.</li><li>• Utilize clarifying questions or paraphrasing techniques</li></ul>   |

# » SAMPLE CONVERSATION GUIDE + OUTLINES

## A METHODOLOGY FOR PRIMING THE HEART

1. Thank Host + Attendees (stepping into a brave and vulnerable space)
2. Describe embRACE LA (see below for sample script)
3. Go over the Agenda + Format of the Conversation
  - a. Agenda: Main Parts of the Conversation
  - b. Format: Peer-to-Peer and/or Group Share
4. Go over any Shared Agreements
  - a. Be present – let's try to stay off of our cell phones
  - b. Be mindful of time when speaking—a space to listen and learn
  - c. Confidentiality – what's said in the conversation stays in the conversation unless otherwise permitted
  - d. Feel free to get up at any time and use the bathroom, get some food, take a break, etc.
5. Land Acknowledgement (see below for sample script)
6. Centering Exercise (e.g. read a poem, facilitate a breathing or visualization exercise) embRACE L.A. is an initiative aimed at unifying Angelenos and empowering communities through citywide conversations about race and racism in order to challenge and change inequities.

Launched by LA City Council President Herb Wesson and Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, in partnership with Advancement Project California, Community Coalition, Department of the Future and Revolve Impact, the initiative seeks to foster understanding, healing & growth throughout Los Angeles.

Land Acknowledgement: "I would like to acknowledge that this conversation is being held on the traditional lands of the \_\_\_\_\_ People, and we pay our respects to elders both past and present."





## Why Introduce The Practice **Of Land Acknowledgment?**

Offer recognition and respect.

Counter the “doctrine of discovery” with the true story of the people who were already here.

Create a broader public awareness of the history that has led to this moment.

Begin to repair relationships with Native communities and with the land.

Support larger truth-telling and reconciliation efforts.

Remind people that colonization an ongoing process, with Native lands still occupied due to deceptive and broken treaties.

Take a cue from Indigenous protocol, opening up space with reverence and respect.

Inspire ongoing action and relationship.

Acknowledgment by itself is a small gesture. It becomes meaningful when coupled with authentic relationship and informed action. But this beginning can be an opening to greater public consciousness of Native sovereignty and cultural rights, a step toward equitable relationship and reconciliation.

To learn more, and to download an #HonorNativeLand Guide please visit <https://usdac.us/nativeland>

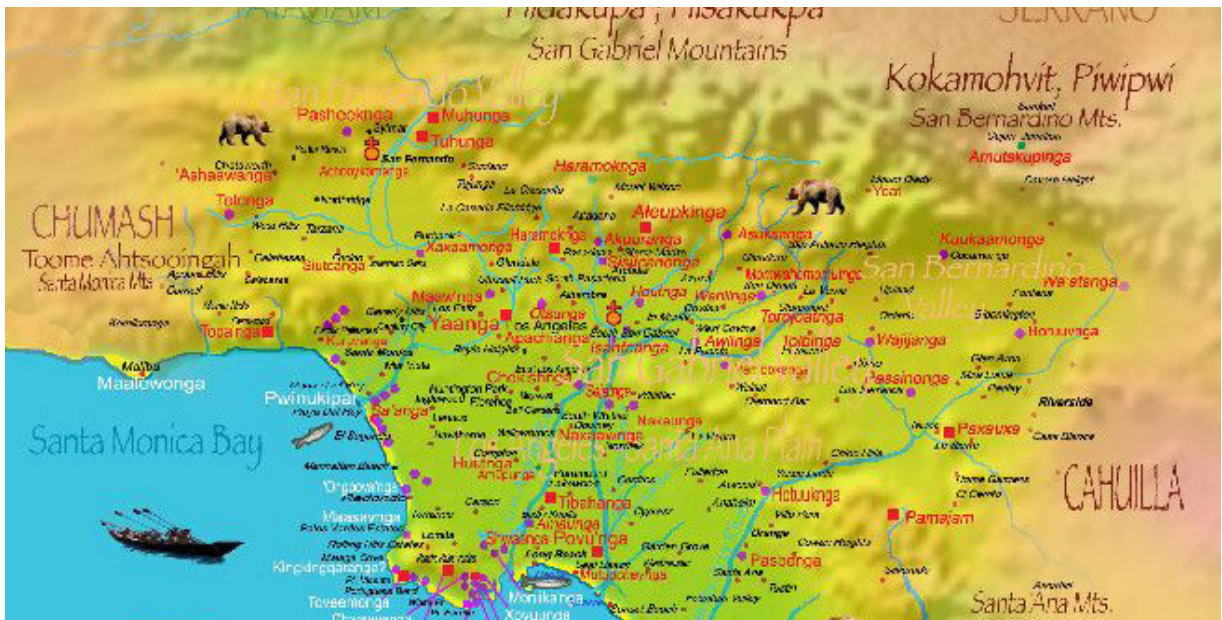
You could also learn more at <https://locallove.ca/issues/what-are-land-acknowledgements-and-why-do-they-matter/#.XUiCEZNKjq2>

# » LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following was taken from the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture's "Honor Native Land: A Guide and Call to Acknowledgment:"

In countries such as New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and among tribal nations in the U.S., it is commonplace, even policy, to open events and gatherings by acknowledging the traditional Indigenous inhabitants of that land. While some individuals and cultural and educational institutions in the United States have adopted this custom, the vast majority have not. Together, we can spark a movement to change that.

Acknowledgment is a simple, powerful way of showing respect and a step toward correcting the stories and practices that erase Indigenous people's history and culture and toward inviting and honoring the truth. Imagine this practice widely adopted: imagine cultural venues, classrooms, conference settings, places of worship, sports stadiums, and town halls, acknowledging traditional lands. Millions would be exposed—many for the first time—to the names of the traditional Indigenous inhabitants of the lands they are on, inspiring them to ongoing awareness and action.



# » KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

## FORMAT: POPCORN OR THE WHOLE TABLE

State your name and what do you love about Los Angeles?

State your name and what brought you to this conversation?

Share one word that describes your feelings about race in LA?

How has race shaped your life?

### We Cannot Heal **What We Will Not Face:**

**SET THE FRAME:** What is race? Why now? (Utilize information from the toolkit and make this definition/framework work for you so that there is a working definition of race for the conversation)

**QUESTION:** What are you most proud of – or – least proud of when it comes to “race” in Los Angeles-- from inclusion to exclusion, love or hate, personal or structural?

### Action: **The City We Want To Live In**

**QUESTION:** If LA was transformed to be the most inclusive and equitable city in America, what would it look like, feel like? What is preventing us from getting there?

### Next Steps: **Personal Commitments**

Given our conversation what can WE do as everyday people or what can local government do to address the problems and or solutions we talked about tonight?

**NOTE:** Those participating in embRACE LA will have an opportunity to provide input on the proposed creation of an Office of Racial Equity that would work closely with elected officials and City staff to establish racial equity as a core principle within all aspects of government including services, programs, and policies. The Office of Racial Equity would work closely with community-based organizations and residents to form strong partnerships and relationships between the community and City government to create a city-wide culture of racial equity where equity, social justice, and community engagement are at the heart of decision making.

**What’s your personal commitment to addressing this issue?**

**If you could say something to your elected official regarding race in Los Angeles, what would you say?**



# » KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOR

## FORMAT: POPCORN OR THE WHOLE TABLE

### Get **Involved**

**NOTE:** Every conversation has its own magic, however, we want to inspire people to stay connected and to get involved in continuing to host embRACE LA conversations and to get involved in their local community. These are a couple of concrete ways for people to get involved in ongoing racial justice campaigns:

- Get involved with a community based organization that speaks to you. Check out the
- embRACE LA website's resource page for inspiration.
- Sign up on the embRACE LA list-serve online to stay up-to-date on future convenings,
- activities, and to get involved in the campaign to establish an Office of Racial Equity
- Start a private Facebook page for those who participated could stay in touch
- Commit to convening for a conversation monthly, quarterly, etc.

### Closing: **Thank you + Reflections**

Make sure to close the conversation with space for attendees to offer reflections and appreciations on the journey that they just undertook. Ask attendees if they learned anything new, made a new connection and/or had a memorable experience. This is also the place where you could facilitate a closing art activity. Downloadable examples can also be found on the embRACE LA website.

- Appreciations and Reflections
- Closing Art Activity and/or Acknowledgement Circle
- Racial Equity Survey

Note: Make sure to gather a sign-up sheet and share the following concrete next steps.

# DIGITAL BEST PRACTICES SHARABLE ASSETS

## Be a Part **Of The Conversation**

Please remember to include the following hashtags on all social media posts -  
#embrACELA and #embrACETheConversation

### SAMPLE POSTS



# » EMBRACE LA PARTNERS

## WE CANNOT HEAL WHAT WE WILL NOT FACE

Consider this an invitation to have an imaginative conversation on fear, dreams, personal aspirations and our collective future, all anchored by one of the most overdue conversations of our time: race, human relationships, and the future of Los Angeles.

At the end of the day we are convening people over an important conversation that people are choosing to have. The following are our anchor partners who are playing a critical role in the overall success of embrACE LA.

### Presented By

LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT  
**HERB WESSON**  
LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCILMEMBER, DISTRICT 10



COUNCILMEMBER  
**MITCH O'FARRELL**  
LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL, 13TH DISTRICT

### Producing Partners



### Toolkit Design





# » EMBRACE LA PARTNERS

## WE CANNOT HEAL WHAT WE WILL NOT FACE

### Connect **Us**

Join us as we break bread, share stories and engage in honest, frank and often difficult

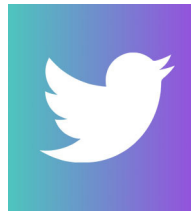
conversations about race and how we can help change inequities in our personal lives and on a policy level.

If you've already registered to host or attend an embRACE LA conversation, please follow us on our social channels or visit the embRACE LA Facebook page for tips, insights and a community of people who have embraced the conversation.



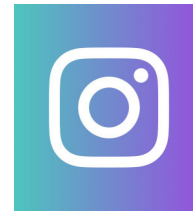
Facebook

**@embracelosangeles**



Twitter

**@embracela**



Instagram

**@embracelosangeles**

If you have any questions, thoughts or comments about embRACE LA, please send us an email at **info@embracela.com**. A representative from embRACE LA will contact you.

You could also visit our website at **www.embracela.org** where you will find additional information, including a frequently asked question page.

Toolkit **Design**

**REVOLVE**  
I M P A C T

**JOIN US AS WE SEEK TO FOSTER  
UNDERSTANDING, HEALING AND GROWTH  
THROUGHOUT LOS ANGELES.**

