

CELEBRATION AS SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

HOW CULTURAL FESTIVALS FOSTER
REPAIR AND BUILD CONNECTION



JUNE 2025



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ABOUT EMBRACE BOSTON

Founded in 2017, Embrace Boston envisions a radically inclusive and equitable Boston where everyone belongs and Black people prosper, grounded in joy, love, and wellbeing. Our mission is to dismantle structural racism through our work at the intersection of arts and culture, and research and policy. We hold a vision for a city and a nation that is truly worthy of us all and believe that our destinies, irrespective of one’s racial or ethnic identity, are inextricably linked.



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KEY TERMS

ACTIVATION. A temporary or semi-permanent creative intervention designed to engage the public with art in unexpected or non-traditional spaces.

AFRO LATINIDAD. The set of common cultural identities and experiences shared by individuals of both African descent and of Latin American or Caribbean heritage.

PLACEMAKING. The intentional process of designing, developing, and transforming public spaces in ways that center the needs, preferences, and cultural norms of residents.

SOCIAL CAPITAL. Social capital is a term used by social scientists to describe the potential utility and value of an individual's social connections. The use of the term "capital" is intentional and meant to suggest how relationships with other people can be activated to achieve a specific use or purpose.

SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE. The physical spaces, organizations, and institutions that facilitate social connections, foster relationships, and cohesion in a given community.

THIRD SPACE. Social environments that are neither home (the "first space") nor work/school (the "second space"), but serve as informal, public, or community spaces where people can interact, socialize, and create new connections.

WHITE SUPREMACY. The ideology and system of beliefs that structure institutions, policies, and cultural practices to maintain white advantage and power, and justify the continued social, political, and economic domination by white people over people of color.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Given the national context of increasing racialized strife, xenophobia, and attacks on diversity, equity, and inclusion, **it is more important than ever that we work together to create spaces where the vision of a racially just and radically inclusive future can be nurtured and developed.** In moments wherein forces of white supremacy regain control of political, economic, and social institutions, hard-won progress is eroded, the lives and livelihoods of people of color are threatened, and our entire nation suffers. As such, it is more crucial than ever that those committed to repairing the harms of systemic racism have safe and supportive spaces and occasions to convene.

Because white supremacy has been institutionalized in the very fabric of our society, disrupting its function requires building connections and trust between individuals across a variety of sectors and walks of life. The codification of anti-Blackness over centuries and continuing impact of recent administrations' hostility to the ideals of justice and equity require that we activate the movement for racial justice in innovative and creative spaces that sit beyond the traditional avenues of policy and political advocacy. This research, and Embrace Boston's overall mission, is guided by the conviction that cultural events and gatherings are critical spaces for developing momentum and inspiration for the work that advancing the goal of a racially just society requires.

PICTURED ON PREVIOUS PAGE. BOMBAntillana leads Massó "¡Con Salsa!" festival attendees in a Bomba lesson. Shaped by the West African and Taino experiences on the island of Puerto Rico during Spanish rule and beyond, practicing the art of movement and music through Bomba allows participants to engage in creative expression, healing, and resistance.

This report presents findings from Embrace Boston’s ethnographic study of cultural and arts events that center and celebrate people of color. This research asks how festivals put on by and for racially minoritized people can create spaces where feelings of belonging and connection to a larger community of changemakers can be activated and deepened. By collecting data at events in the greater Boston area, this project provides empirical evidence for what is anecdotally understood about the utility of arts and cultural events in building and sustaining social movements.

We launched this study at two activations in 2024: Embrace’s Juneteenth events, which include an evening honors celebration, a conference, and a block party; and Embrace’s Massó ¡Con Salsa! International Music Festival held during National Hispanic Heritage Month. Using semi-structured interviews, observations, and a post-event survey, we explored what motivated participants to attend, what they experienced at the events, and the meaning they made from participating.

THIS RESEARCH ASKS HOW FESTIVALS PUT ON BY AND FOR RACIALLY MINORITIZED PEOPLE CAN CREATE SPACES WHERE FEELINGS OF BELONGING AND CONNECTION TO A LARGER COMMUNITY OF CHANGEMAKERS CAN BE ACTIVATED AND DEEPEMED.

MAJOR THEMES

This report details the results of our analysis of data collected to-date, organized by the following four major themes recounted by our participants:

- * **First**, participants reported feeling as though the events created spaces in which they belonged and could be their authentic selves.
- * **Second**, study participants highlighted that they valued being in a space that centered Black joy and fostered optimism and hope in a difficult time.
- * **Third**, participants reported that they valued the chance to gather and feel connected to others.
- * **Fourth**, participants noted that being at the events made them feel inspired to strategize ways to build a more inclusive city and commonwealth.

ACTIVATIONS STUDIED

Embrace's Juneteenth Event Series



Massó ¡Con Salsa! Music Festival



Highlighting the progressive potential of the arts in times when traditional means of advancing racial justice are being curtailed or eliminated is more important than ever. The results of this report suggest that arts and cultural organizations should consider how their own work contributes to the larger effort to sustain the movement for racial justice. Using a similar study design at other events has the potential not only to develop a robust research base, but also to help arts and cultural organizations to demonstrate the impact and value of their own programming. Additionally, public and private supporters of the arts will benefit from seeing the empirical evidence speaking to the value of cultural festivals that can come only from listening to event attendees.

Regular, in-person opportunities to engage around issues of racial justice are critical to disrupting the exclusionary social foundations on which the U.S. was built. As such, we argue that ensuring the availability of opportunities to gather and convene at cultural events is an important way of developing a radically inclusive society. We see arts and cultural events as critical pieces of a city's social infrastructure—or the collection of spaces and organizations where people can gather informally to connect and build community. *Our democracy cannot thrive in digital spaces alone. Coming together to share and connect is an essential building block of our civic commons, where the ideals of a radically inclusive society can be enacted and advanced.*

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 To repair the harm caused by chattel slavery and institutionalized racial discrimination, it is necessary to create spaces where the full humanity and cultural wealth of the Black community are centered.
- 2 Both municipalities and private organizations should support artists and arts organizations that can leverage cultural knowledge in the service of economic and racial justice.
- 3 Racially inclusive placemaking requires sustained, rather than one-off, investments that allow arts and cultural activations created by and for people of color to become part of the city's social infrastructure.
- 4 Healing and repairing the harms of white supremacy are collective endeavors and require that stakeholders from various sectors come together in spaces and social convenings that embody the vision of a just society.
- 5 It is resource-intensive but necessary to understand how a city's social infrastructure can create belonging, narrative change, and movement-building capacity. Arts and culture organizations, philanthropic entities invested in racial justice, and city planners alike should all be concerned with generating and measuring outcomes.

Both public and private organizations play an important role in developing and sustaining a city's social infrastructure. We believe that when different stories about who belongs here take root, Boston can and will move beyond its reputation as a city defined by racism and fulfill what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. saw as its potential to be "the testing ground for the ideals of freedom."¹ We believe that when their presence is affirmed, their contributions are celebrated, and like-minded people surround them, activists, artists, and changemakers of color stay and make Boston their home. And we believe that each activation, built space, and festival that facilitates these experiences in turn feeds and sustains the work still to be done, and makes strides in advancing a more equitable democracy for all.

Art by Beatriz Whitehall





1

INTRODUCTION

Over the course of history, progress toward racial justice in our country has, time and again, been met with resistance.

From Civil War reconstruction to the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s to the presidency of Barack Obama to the Black Lives Matter movement, efforts to institutionalize racial equity have garnered substantial backlash. In moments like these, wherein forces of white supremacy regain control of political, economic, and social institutions, hard-won progress is eroded, the lives and livelihoods of people of color are threatened, and our entire nation suffers. In these times of great challenge and polarization, it is important to remember that we have faced obstacles before and that we can and will continue to strive for a just society that recognizes the full humanity of all people. It is crucial that we who believe in racial justice continue to build community and support hope through a variety of means. Central to these strategies is the belief that developing a collective that is willing to advocate for racial justice requires building connections and trust between individuals across a variety of sectors and walks of life. Cultural events and gatherings are therefore critical to bringing supporters and advocates together to generate momentum and inspiration for the work that achieving a racially just society requires.

PICTURED ON PREVIOUS PAGE. Community in action on the dancefloor at the second annual Embrace Honors MLK, a night dedicated to uplifting the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

FESTIVAL ECOLOGIES AND RACIAL JUSTICE

Scholars who study the role of festivals in contemporary society have demonstrated that beyond cultural expression, festivals are important sites of political, economic, and social activity whose impacts reach beyond the geographic and temporal boundaries of the event itself.^{2,3,4} As collective experiences textured by music, dance, and other forms of cultural expression, festivals have important affective and embodied impacts on participants.^{5,6} As such, festivals have distinct and meaningful “emotional ecologies” as sites that offer the opportunity to experience and express emotions in a group setting.^{7,8,9} Feelings of fellowship and camaraderie are thought to reflect an important social and emotional dimension of human beings, representing our need for interaction, affective exchange, and social contact.^{10,11} By coming together to enjoy the arts and cultural expression, festival attendees have reported that their participation creates feelings of belonging and affirmation, especially when their own cultural backgrounds are represented.^{12,13,14,15}



2024 Embrace Ideas Festival conference participants connect.

For people of color in the U.S., cultural festivals hold the added significance of providing a welcome and vital reprieve from daily life that is often textured by white social norms and cultural expression.^{16,17} Black cultural festivals, in particular, are important sites for placemaking, the development of racial solidarity, and the expression of emotions that reflect the interconnected nature of joy and struggle.^{18,19,20,21} Martha Radice, an anthropologist and ethnographer, argues that the Black festival tradition embodied by carnival can be described as “grasping at joy.”²² And, cultural studies researchers have suggested that “showing out” at Black cultural events such as parades, festivals, and block parties is not only an important form of social-psychological healing, but also an embodied opportunity to remember what can be achieved through perseverance.^{23,24}

Gathering in celebration has long been part of the Black liberatory tradition in this country.^{25,26,27} For example, Rachel Carrico’s research on contemporary “second line” brass parades in New Orleans describes the origins of these expressions of Black festival culture in the work of Black benevolent and racial uplift societies of the 19th century.²⁸ Especially in the antebellum period, religious, familial, and holiday gatherings were sites for both personal replenishment and for nurturing the movement for racial justice clandestinely.^{29,30} Although organizing for racial justice does not carry the same degree of danger today as it did during the time of slavery, it continues to hold deep contemporary significance for Black people and for communities of color more broadly. In the context of increasing societal antagonism and hostility to the ideal of racial justice in the U.S., considering how such goals and ideals can be pursued through gathering, expression, and celebration is of utmost importance. In the remainder of this report, we discuss findings from Embrace Boston’s research on how such events can advance a hopeful, racially just vision for our society.

EXPANDING THE EVIDENCE BASE

Embrace Boston’s work is guided by the conviction that more rigorous research exploring festivals organized by and for communities of color should be conducted. The literature documenting the radical potential of cultural gatherings is small but growing, profound but often only published in academic journals and books. We suggest that additional research is still needed and that it should be made available in a more egalitarian fashion, to audiences outside of the academe. In moments when our democracy is tried and white supremacy once again appears to gain currency, it is crucial that we explore promising practices of fighting for racial justice from all angles, and share those findings widely. We hope that the evidence introduced in this report will inspire and support other arts and culture organizations to build the case for the deep importance and potential of their work. Additionally, public and private supporters of the arts will benefit from seeing the empirical evidence that speaks to the value of cultural festivals that can come only from listening to event attendees.

The Embrace Boston research team is working to extend existing research on cultural gatherings in order to understand how they can be used to build community, create spaces of belonging, and provide both inspiration and actionable strategies to advance racial justice work. In this report, we preview early findings from the first of multiple research projects that Embrace Boston is undertaking to demonstrate the potential of pursuing racial justice through cultural events and the arts. We provide an overview of what we learned from conducting ethnographic research at two 2024 activations put on by Embrace Boston—a weeklong set of events honoring Juneteenth and the Embrace Massó ¡Con Salsa! International Music Festival.³¹ Using data from interviews, observations, and surveys, this report details how cultural events organized by and for people of color are capable of building spaces of belonging where participants not only experience feelings of joy, but also feel as though they can develop or deepen connections with others who are dedicated to advancing the movement for racial justice.

In reflecting on the meaning and value that participants found in the two activations, we argue that opportunities to convene and celebrate are important modes of engaging in radically inclusive placemaking. **Placemaking can be understood as the processes through which people establish feelings of connection and claims to certain spaces.**³² In the case of groups that have experienced *de jure* and *de facto* exclusion, placemaking can be an emancipatory practice through which narratives of who belongs can be upended and rewritten.³³

WE ARGUE THAT
OPPORTUNITIES TO
CONVENE AND CELEBRATE
ARE IMPORTANT MODES OF
ENGAGING IN RADICALLY
INCLUSIVE PLACEMAKING.

As occasions to convene and express support for the vision of a radically inclusive city, arts and cultural festivals put on for and by people of color are also an important piece of a city's social infrastructure. A term used by urban planners and social scientists, **social infrastructure is the set of physical and associative resources that allow people to gather, engage, and sustain a community's social cohesion.**³⁴ A robust social infrastructure includes public places to convene and perennial events that serve as occasions to come together. In this report, we explore what we learned from attendees about the value of convening in the pursuit of racial justice and we make recommendations for the support of a radically inclusive social infrastructure here in Boston, and beyond. When communities feel that they can rely on a cultural resource time and time again, and incorporate that resource into their regular practice of bonding, celebration, and activism, a festival or activation transcends a temporal experience and becomes a part of the fabric of people's lives. In this way, investments in festivals put on by and for people of color also constitute investments in a radically inclusive social infrastructure.



Smiles, sunshine, and solidarity! Two festivalgoers soak up the joy at the Juneteenth Block Party held at Roxbury Community College.



2

FINDINGS

Guided by the desire to understand the experiences of attendees at cultural events and festivals in the Boston area, we developed an ethnographic research study that employs a mixed methods design.³⁵ We conducted this study at two Embrace Boston activations in 2024: Embrace’s Juneteenth events which include an evening honors celebration, a conference, and a block party; and Embrace’s Massó ¡Con Salsa! International Music Festival held during National Hispanic Heritage Month.

To ensure that interview participants felt able to speak candidly, the Embrace Boston research team relied mostly on contracted local researchers with expertise in qualitative research—all of whom identified as Black, Indigenous, Latine, or Afro-Latine—to collect interview and observation data.

Using semi-structured interviews and observations, our research design sought to explore what motivated participants to attend the activations, what they experienced while at the events, and the meaning they made from participating. In all, the team completed 46 structured observations and 107 on-site interviews with attendees; at Massó ¡Con Salsa!, most interviews were conducted in Spanish. Additionally, we collected 137 surveys from attendees who pre-registered for Embrace Boston’s Juneteenth week events.

PICTURED ON PREVIOUS PAGE. The rhythms of Afro-Latine culture pulsed through the city at the Massó ¡Con Salsa! International Music Festival, where generations came together to dance, celebrate, and honor the legacy of José Massó III on the Boston Common.

KEY THEMES

After coding interview transcripts and analyzing observation and survey data, four key themes emerged with respect to what motivated participants to attend and what they believed they gained from participating:

- * **First**, participants reported feeling as though the events created spaces in which they belonged and where they could be their authentic selves.
- * **Second**, study participants highlighted that they valued being in a space that centered Black joy and fostered optimism and hope in a difficult time.
- * **Third**, participants reported that they valued the chance to gather and feel connected to others; this included being in a communal space and making connections to other attendees.
- * **Fourth**, participants noted that being at the events made them feel inspired to strategize ways to build a more inclusive city and commonwealth.



Two Celtics fans and festival goers celebrate the team's latest banner and share a joyful moment at the 2024 Juneteenth Block Party held at Roxbury Community College.

As a study seeking to explore the value of arts and cultural events that center people of color, the research presented here provides an opening and an invitation to think deeply about the larger impact and meaning of these events. Future data collection at arts and cultural events by other organizations can deepen and expand these findings. Using a similar study design at other events has the potential not only to develop a robust research base, but also to help arts and cultural organizations to demonstrate and expand the impact and value of their own programming.

SPACES OF BELONGING

Dominant narratives about Boston tend to center its history as a stronghold of European immigrant groups and a place where ethnic and racial divisions define the city's culture. Many Bostonians know that, in reality, it is a diverse city where people of color now make up the majority, yet the image of Boston as a city dominated by whiteness remains a powerful one.³⁶ What's more, white dominance has often been enforced violently, making many parts of the city unsafe for people of color—and especially Black people.³⁷ Many interviewees contextualized their experiences at the activations by referencing their experiences of Boston as a city textured by racism. Some noted that city-wide events where Black and Brown people were the majority of attendees made them feel seen and validated in a city where that is not always the norm:

Boston is white. It's really white. And so there's something about being able to celebrate Blackness, Black joy in the midst of being surrounded by whiteness. It's just a reminder of our perseverance, our resilience, and our ability to overcome anything that comes our way.

Massachusetts has a long history of racism and I think a lot of the speakers today put it very well that even though there is a majority Black population here, a lot of voices and arts are not centered. And so I think to have a week-long celebration that is centering Black voices, Black ideas, Black thoughts, Black businesses, Black food, Black culture, it's especially meaningful in a city like Boston when we need so much more of that.

Attendees found it particularly meaningful to gather with members of their community and engage in culturally familiar celebratory traditions, especially as a means of asserting their presence, which contrasted with a feeling of invisibility in typical civic life:

Bringing my son here for me is very important because we live in a city where we are not... however you want to put it, either as a Black person or as a Latino, we are not there. So, let there be representation of people who look like him, let him listen to his music that we listen to in the house.

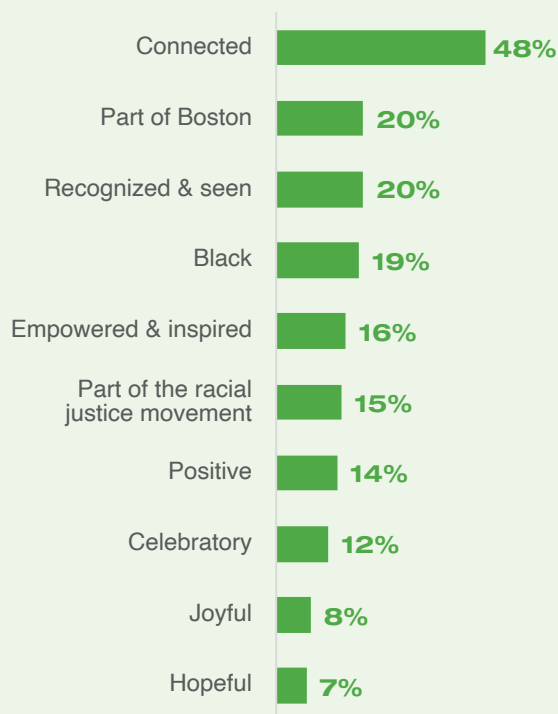
Respondents also articulated that attending these events was a way of reclaiming space in the city they called home. As one attendee explained, “I think it’s imperative for Black and Brown people in Boston to know that these spaces are for us, even though a lot of harm has been done on this land.” Another attendee noted:

I think it’s important to take over spaces that historically haven’t been friendly or inviting to people of color. And so to do this free and open to the public, I think is really beautiful. And it’s a good opportunity for other people to see what Boston has to offer.

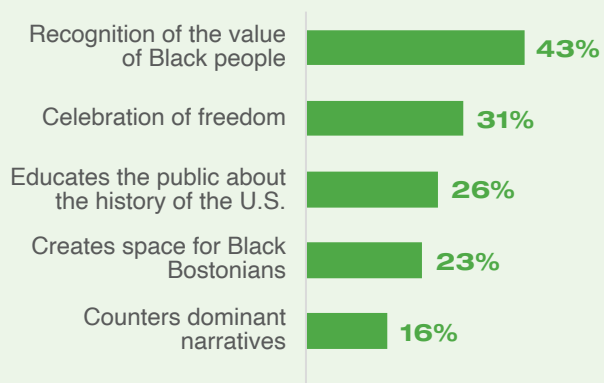
Given the city’s reputation as a place where people of color have often felt unwelcome, interviewees highlighted how important it was to attend events where racial justice was centered, where they felt able to be their authentic selves, and where they felt purposefully affirmed and welcomed.

MEANING MAKING & JUNETEENTH CELEBRATIONS

What does it mean to you, personally, to have a Juneteenth celebration in Boston?



What does it mean for the city to have a Juneteenth celebration in Boston?



CENTERING BLACKNESS

In addition to feeling a larger sense of belonging at the activations, many interviewees spoke specifically about how they valued the ways in which Blackness was unapologetically centered at the events. In conversations with attendees, many remarked that, when they first arrived at the activations, they were struck by the way it felt to enter a Black-majority space. One Juneteenth activation attendee commented, “when I walked in and I saw Black people in their different outfits, they came to show up and show out. The energy that I felt was very affirmed.”

From the people in the room to the focus and design of the events, a resounding theme in interviews was how participants appreciated the salience of Black culture at the events, and the way that it made them feel like they belonged:

I think it feels really good to be in a space where you see a lot of people who look like you and they're here for the same thing. So just feeling centered in Blackness, which I imagine is what Embrace Boston is all about, [it] is something that I definitely felt during this event.

It helps people like me feel seen because it is focused on us. And it just gives you a space where you don't have to wear armor. And so that gives a sense of relaxation...So it just helps to fortify the work that's being done by all of us, just to say, “Okay, there are other people in the community doing this and it's good.”

Among attendees of the Massó “¡Con Salsa!” activation, a number of interviewees commented that it was a unique and special experience to be in a space where Afro-Latines were centered and celebrated:

Many people don't know about Afro-Latines, they think it's only Afro-Americans who live here in the United States. But in all Latin America we have Afro-Latines, as it is in Ecuador, as it is in Colombia, in Argentina, in Chile. The Brown people were brought by the Spaniards and spread throughout South America. So, for me it is good that other people, other cultures, the Anglo-Saxon culture knows a little bit about this part, which they probably ignore.

“WE ARE NOT A MONOLITH.”

At the same time that Blackness and Afro-Latinidad were centered at the events, many interviewees also noted that the activations did not essentialize or dictate a singular vision of what it means to be Black or Afro-Latine. A number of interviewees highlighted that they felt like they could bring multiple dimensions of their identities to the activations:

It's a reminder that Black people are not a monolith and that we exist in different pockets and we all, when we find each other, there's just this familiarity that reminds us that we are stronger together. And so I feel that sense of community, I feel that sense of determination and hunger and drive, and I want to be connected to that. I want to tap into that. And so I feel really, really good about being in this space because it was that reminder for me.

Again, I can only speak from my personal experience as a biracial woman with my mom being white and my father being Black. It's the space where I don't have to code switch. I personally feel comfortable. I identify more as Black. So being in this space, I don't feel like I have to turn on something to be with my white colleagues. You're in my space. So it's beautiful.

Some respondents recounted that it felt good to be in a communal space where they could be their authentic selves, with respect to multiple aspects of their identities that do not always feel welcomed:

To be affirmed in my Blackness and my queerness and my age-ness. It's nice to be in a space that seems intergenerational in some ways because those don't happen, but also intersectional because we give a lot of lip service to being intersectional when really Black and Brown communities sometimes are the least intersectional communities and are so rooted in bias . . . and particularly anti-gay stuff. So it's refreshing to be in a space where that's not predominant.

Being Afro-Latino in Boston, you feel very displaced. I mean, I go to the Dominican festival because that's what we have, I go to the Puerto Rican festival, because that's what we have...but I felt that this one, in particular, came to fill all the aspects of who I am: I'm Black and I'm Latina at the same time.



**IT'S A REMINDER THAT
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CALLING IN.

The thematic and programmatic focus of the Juneteenth and Massó “¡Con Salsa!” activations purposefully centered and celebrated Black people and people of the African diaspora. This focus, however, did not preclude the participation of attendees of other racial and ethnic backgrounds. Some Black interviewees noted the participation of people who were not of African descent, and commented that they saw this as a signal of broad support for the vision of a racially just society. Additionally, attendees who were not of African descent commented that they felt a sense of welcome and belonging as allies who want to support Black liberation:

And I have to say, I’m a white woman, and I thought, “What’s it going to be like?... Will I fit in?” Juneteenth isn’t really my holiday, but I consider myself an ally and I’m an educator of all children, so I always want to know more and learn more, and try to be a better educator, and just a better person. So, these kinds of experiences really nourish me in so many different ways.

Oh my gosh, I think it’s so important. It’s long overdue. I think it’s important for those who have ancestral connections to the holiday, but also people like me, just a member of the community. I have a different history, but I want to celebrate other people’s history and joy.



Over 5000 gathered at the first Embrace Massó ¡Con Salsa! International Music Festival in September 2024 on the Boston Common.

CURATION, MUSIC, AND ART.

As interviewees talked about the ways in which the activations made them feel centered and welcomed, their comments frequently highlighted how specific programming and curatorial decisions helped to create a radically welcoming atmosphere, contributing to their sense of belonging. At each of the activations, interview participants frequently brought up how the programming and the aesthetics delivered a clear message that these were events created by and for people of African and Afro-Latine descent. From nationally known speakers and performers to local DJs and leaders, both the Juneteenth and Massó “¡Con Salsa!” events were organized around the cultural and intellectual creativity of Black Americans and Afro Latinos. Attendees often reflected on how the curation of the events signaled that their interests, tastes, and cultural norms were shared by organizers.

The saturation of familiar and uplifting music was, according to attendees, an especially powerful signal of their belonging. Many of interviewees told us that all of the music, from the DJ sets to the live performances, made them feel like the events were specifically designed with their tastes in mind:

It's really reflective of just the kind of way that the Black community expresses themselves through the arts. So I think that for describing it for someone who isn't here, it would be more so uplifting through the way that the Black community likes to express their selves and their culture as well.

I'll tell you the truth, walking into this area, listening to the music in the background on a sunny day on the Common, it doesn't get any better. Right now, we're listening to... Oh, my God! The Venezuelan salsero... [singing] Yo te busco por aquí. Listening to Oscar D'León singing “Llorarás” in the middle of Boston Common on a Saturday in September. It doesn't get any better than that.

Some participants specifically mentioned that the music and design choices reminded them of events such as family reunions, and the way Black culture centers love and mutual care. One attendee commented that they appreciated the decor that featured uplifting words and messaging, noting that she felt especially moved by “the banners talking about Black joy, community, unity and legacy...I think that those are very staple pillars that the Black community likes to strive for and kind of hold dear.” Others mentioned their appreciation of the two-story mural featuring a portrait of a Black woman that served as the backdrop in one of the spaces that hosted Juneteenth-week events. For many interviewees, the careful curation of the events provided important emotional and social cues that these were events designed with them in mind, where they belonged:

It just feels like you have a place, you have a community, you have a home to enjoy some of the things that I enjoy like art and seeing beautiful Black people, looking nice and just having fun and having a good time and it's just all love. It's just nice.

One attendee, who was moved by the central role that music and art played in the June-teenth celebrations, noted how much he valued having the experience of attending and how he wished that others might have the same opportunity. He explained:

But to embark in a space like this, to generate that level of... It's beyond knowledge. It's something that the African Americans, and even in Africa, we communicated through language, music, art. It's only because of the systematic racism in this country that it gets commercialized. But in this space . . . I would call "intimacy with the truth of it" creates an environment ... I mean, my heart goes out because there's a thousand people that I would've invited to something like this.

Overall, interviewees spoke about the many ways that the events gave them a sense of belonging which they felt and appreciated deeply. Many spoke about how the activations made them feel like they belonged and that this feeling of belonging was often intertwined with feelings of joy.



Cultural leaders Thaddeus Miles, Sheena Collier, and Seneca Scott, joined moderator Andrés Holder for a conversation about cultural exchange during the 2024 Embrace Ideas Festival held at MassArt.

BLACK JOY

For most interviewees, it was the experience of being together in celebration that felt meaningful and fulfilling. Interviewees described feeling something that sociologists refer to as **collective effervescence—a shared exuberance and excitement that emanates from a celebratory gathering**.³⁸ Interviewees’ descriptions of their physical, emotional, and spiritual experiences at the Juneteenth and Massó “¡Con Salsa!” events emphasized how the activations created spaces of joy that were unique and specially attuned to Black culture. Kleaver Cruz, founder of The Black Joy Project, has described Black joy as an emotional state that does not require “dismissing or creating an ‘alternate’ Black narrative that ignores the realities of our collective pain; rather, it is about holding the pain and injustice...in tension with the joy we experience. It’s about using that joy as an entry into understanding the oppressive forces we navigate through as a means to imagine and create a world free of them.”³⁹

In interviews at the activations, the importance of creating citywide opportunities specifically for Black people to experience joy came up time and again. Summarizing the empowering, jubilant feel of one of the Juneteenth events, one respondent commented, “if there was a visual definition for Black Joy, I think tonight would represent that.” Others mentioned how they appreciated that there was specific attention to the need to create joyful spaces for gathering, even when the state of the world feels uncertain and challenging:

I feel full of joy, I feel in community, I feel safe. I feel renewed... I feel embraced. There are many moments of loneliness, but now I feel embraced and I feel happy.

I think again, it’s important for communities of color, for Black communities to have something joyful, right? That people can attend. I think a lot of times, things that are out there focus on things that are not so happy and joyful. And it’s okay to be realistic and real to see what’s happening, but also to see the holistic community as well. I love that.

To me, the vibe is joyful, communal, vibrant, bright, warm, cheerful, Black AF, and celebratory!

SOUL CARE

As interviewees spoke about their embodied experiences of joy and jubilation at the activations, many commented that these experiences were not only enjoyable but also deeply meaningful to sustaining their work as advocates. As Audre Lorde stated in the opening of *A Burst of Light*, “caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.”⁴⁰ Some interviewees commented directly on their belief that it is essential to create spaces of joy and celebration for people involved in racial justice work:

I think it's very important that in the midst of being in the fight, in the trenches and the struggle, that we make space for joy, for rest, for community, comradery, fellowship, sisterhood, brotherhood, that we remember that we're here. In spite of everything, in spite of all efforts to defeat and deprive us, we are still here, and we are standing proudly, and we are standing together, and we will continue to do so.

To me [the Juneteenth activation] means that an organization has finally decided that they would like me and mine to be seen and celebrated, not just advocated for or organized. Someone just wanted us to experience some singular joy without 857 calls to action hanging over our heads. And I appreciate that.

In interviews, attendees explained how the activations fulfilled a sometimes undermet need to take time for self care and healing. One participant said, “this has been a place for me to get mentally, physically, spiritually fit, and I appreciate that.” Another attendee used the term, “soul care,” when discussing what he experienced at the events, saying:

I feel real soul care intellectually, my soul and my heart, my legacy with my children and their children's children, can't put a price on it... I've had bullets fly by my head in the name of working for the cause.... But it was this stuff that Embrace has been doing, that's been really feeding my soul. And so if it's doing it for me, authentically, then I can only imagine what it's doing for everybody else. And our city desperately needs it.

Others made similar comments about the ways in which they felt cared for and nourished by the opportunities to gather together and celebrate:

Oh, I feel really restored being in this space. This is really exhausting work and especially in Boston, it's very hard to build something for people of color and to maintain it and to keep it growing and relevant and not just fall to accepting money and then not having any progress. But every single person here is a working person. No one who has come here and that I've listened to is somebody that is just there to just give lip service to the entire movement. And so because of that, and because I can see other people also actively doing this work and finding the joy in it, I feel restored being here and I feel more ready to go back to do work and have joy in it.

There's this energy that reminds you of why you do the work that you do...So it's like a recharge of your soul. I was having a week where it was very busy and I was feeling a little burned out. So coming here gave me some energy juice to continue doing what I need to do.

Much of what attendees said about the joyfulness imbued in the Juneteenth and Massó “¡Con Salsa!” activations was based on the healing power of gathering together in community and feeling connected to others. In the section that follows, we present what our study participants told us about the importance of having in-person opportunities to build community with others.



The Boston Arts Academy Spiritual Ensemble, led by Michael W. Bradley, performed at the Juneteenth Honors celebration.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Dr. Martin Luther King's 1963 *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* described an “inescapable network of mutuality. We are tied in a single garment of destiny.”⁴¹ Advocates and scholars alike have referred to the key role that connection, convening, and community play in racial justice movements. In the same vein, participants in this study commented time and again on the profound importance of being in a space where they were surrounded by people of similar backgrounds or like minds. Coming together for a celebratory event, according to interviewees, reminded them that they are not alone and that they are part of a larger community:

I think that it's important to come to make community. In Spain it happens a lot that people of Latin American origin gather in the parks with the chairs on the weekends to eat, to be with the family together. I understand that, at the end of the day, there's a lot of community here that's not in their country, not in their homeland. And to come together, to be in community, to be with each other, to be together... To make community here is very nice.

That it gives the community visibility, which we need. To be present, especially in these times, when there is so much hatred, so much resentment. To know that we are a community that comes, that enjoys, that is happy and that we are here for each other.

CONNECTING THROUGH MUSIC, DANCE.

Music and dance were central features not only of Massó “¡Con Salsa!” but the Juneteenth events, as well. As mentioned earlier in this report, many attendees commented that the musical and aesthetic curation of the two activations made them feel like welcoming spaces. At both the Juneteenth and Massó “¡Con Salsa!” events, we heard reflections about how the music and dancing gave attendees from different backgrounds a way of engaging with one another:

Tuesday really felt poignant in terms of seeing all of these Black bodies and Brown bodies in a space, in unison . . . I was out there and there was great music and I was dancing, and this lady came by me and she started moving along with me, which was really nice. And it sort of encapsulates, I hope, the energy of what this really is about.



A dancer from BOMBAntillana lit up the floor at Embrace Massó ¡Con Salsa! as generations moved together in celebration of José Massó III and the unifying power of Afro-Latine culture.

The other thing that was cool and made me get a vibe, I just taught my boss, who is a white-presenting female, how to do the Wobble. And it was dope because it alleviated assumptions and equalized space. There's a power dynamic between the two of us and literally this conference and the vibe and the energy, the intentional energy, between the music and the dance helped us to break barriers. We work together all the time. So that's a blessing for me.

I think that's what salsa Latino rhythms make. Even if you don't speak the language, you just feel the music and you just want to dance with strangers. It just happened to us. So I think it's pretty cool.

LIKE MINDS, DIVERSITY.

In addition to the value that interviewees placed on simply being in one another's presence at a celebratory event, they also observed that those who were in attendance likely came because they share similar values and hopes for our city. In conversations with attendees, many mentioned that while they valued being in a majority-Black or majority Afro-Latine space, they also appreciated the racial and ethnic diversity of the two activations. Many saw this as evidence of the possibility of coalition building and wider support for the racial justice movement, broadly:

I think it's inspirational. It's like there's so much happening right now in Boston with even the people coming together, leadership of color coming together, Black, Latinx communities working together. It gives me hope.

It's beautiful; one, seeing so many different people, different industries, different generations, everything that was really captured in some of the comments. But also being able to see so many allies. I'm biracial. So for me, being in a space where I don't have to constantly worry about which background I'm tapping into to bring my full self is important and I can do that with these events.

Many interviewees noted that they felt a sense of affinity and comradery with others in the room based not exclusively on shared racial or ethnic background, but on shared values and commitments. These responses allude to a view of the movement for racial justice as rooted in Black and Afro-Latine knowledge and leadership, but requiring the commitment and investment of all people. Some attendees commented on the presence of people of different backgrounds as reason to be hopeful about the future:

These people that I don't know, I'm so excited to get to know them, maybe at the lunch or something, because if they're here, they made a choice. And if they made a choice to be here, then I want to be with them tomorrow.

I wanted my non-Black and Brown colleagues to come today because it's beautiful to see us in this context, intertwined. It's not a Black, a Latino, or white thing. Just for them to see it. I was sharing with my friends, it's so beautiful to see people of different ages. Whether you work in corporate, private, nonprofit, or at McDonald's, all those types of people are here today.

Events like this are, precisely, to bring people to be united, to not be divided as unfortunately we have been for a long time, but this is what brings us together. And despite that, to go ahead with 100% optimism and to always be with the community and with the other communities.

NEW CONNECTIONS.

Study participants noted that they had the chance to meet new people, and that this was something they specifically valued about the Juneteenth and Massó “¡Con Salsa!” activations. Participating in the events allowed many attendees to expand their social networks—many reported that they made connections with new people, sometimes from different backgrounds and professions. One interviewee explained her reason for attending, saying, “I wanted to meet some new people who were also as dedicated to community building as I was.” Another described one of the Juneteenth events in the following way, “I just see love and support. I see a lot of support and a lot of room for everybody wanting to talk, wanting to network, wanting to get to know each other.” Other interviewees noted that they were excited to be in a space where they were surrounded by others with similar interests, and were eager to forge new relationships:

It's really interesting to see a couple familiar faces and be like, oh, okay, I know these people. I know they intentionally do a lot of work to support the Black and Brown community and to see them here, it was like, oh, wow, this is great. But then to see a lot of different people I don't know at all, and then connect with them or say hello and all these other things, it's always an amazing feeling.

Just sitting at the table with people I've never met before, and being able to communicate with them, is really, really productive for me, because I'm really here to network, as well as to hear the program.

Like interviewees, survey respondents also reported talking to other people while they were at the Juneteenth events. Eighty-five percent of our post-event survey respondents said that they spent time talking to at least one other person at one of the events in the Juneteenth activation suite. Among the connections that our survey respondents reported making at those events, more than two-thirds were with someone that the survey respondent did not know previously or someone who they did not already know well. These results suggest that, for many attendees, the Juneteenth activations provided the opportunity to develop new relationships, which was an important goal of those events.

DEEPENING BONDS.

In addition to growing their networks, many of our study participants commented that attending the activations allowed them to deepen their existing connections to others who were also in attendance. Through these opportunities to reconnect, participants built their bonding social capital, or their network of close, established ties. Many interviewees said that the events provided a much-needed opportunity to reconnect:

It just feels like, oh, I'm part of something. And again, being somewhere where you see other people that you know, maybe people you haven't seen in a while. It fosters an opportunity to come together with people.

The people continuously coming and hugging me and engaging because, like I said, all my fellow people are here, all my fellow workers are here. I'm seeing the president of the networking group that I'm in... she's sitting there on the stage. My fellow member and friend...is being the person who's going back and forth... Everyone that I know that is active is here.

I have seen familiar faces, familiar faces that have done great work in the Black and Brown community. And then it's just an atmosphere of support and actively talking and finding out how I can help you or how can you help me. So it was just a great environment.

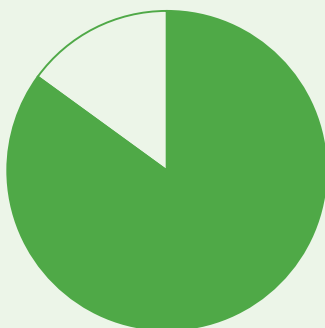
Our survey of Juneteenth activation participants asked respondents whether they anticipated building on the conversations they started with other people at the events in the future. Notably, more than a third of survey respondents who told us that they spoke with another attendee at the Juneteenth events (38%) said that they made specific plans to continue that conversation in the future.

Together, these data suggest that the Juneteenth and Massó “¡Con Salsa!” activations created a space where people felt a sense of connection to one another because of the celebratory and liberatory tenor of both events. Through creating bridges to new contacts and deepening their bonds with existing connections, the events provided participants with spaces where they were able to build their social capital. In the section that follows, we share what study participants said about the ways in which participating in the activations helped them to feel a sense of inspiration and hope for the future through radically reimagining racial and ethnic inclusivity in our society.

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

Can you think of a specific person you connected with at any Embrace event this week?

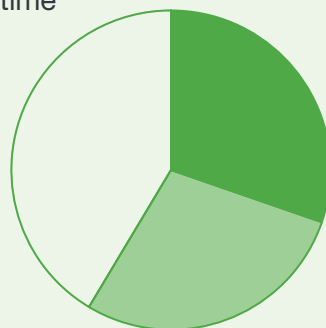
No **15%** Yes **85%**



Can you tell us a little more about this person you spoke with? Was this someone who:

You were meeting for the first time that day **21%**

Was already a close connection **30%**



You were somewhat familiar with but who was not a close connection **28%**

RADICAL REIMAGINING

As chronicled in the opening paragraphs of this report, advancing racial equity in a landscape patterned by four centuries of white supremacy requires advocates to weather fierce backlash and find inspiration in difficult moments. Especially for people of color, engaging in racial justice work can take a toll.⁴² Researchers and activists alike have noted that, without opportunities to replenish in a community of support, burnout can be a real threat to individuals' wellbeing and the racial justice movement itself.⁴³ Perennial opportunities to practice communal healing and to foster care for oneself and others are important both for sustenance and inspiration to carry on.^{44,45}

Festivals, in addition to serving as settings in which this healing and inspiration take place, can amplify a shared vision of hope for the people and places they call home. Although respondents in this study were not directly asked to comment on the connection between festival attendance and issues of racial justice, many made this connection organically. In this section, we share what interviewees said about the importance of being present at events, the way events give rise to visions of a better future, and how participating helped attendees envision a path forward for a more equitable City of Boston.

SHOWING UP.

Many respondents described their presence at the events as part of their personal racial justice practice, and an expression of their commitment to the vision of a more just society. As one interviewee commented, “there is still a lot of work to do and that’s why I’m here—to push the rock up the hill.” Others explained:

The way we practice is by going to the community and listening and engaging in conversations like this. And I think that this idea behind festivals is exactly what I’m thinking... I find this inspiring and I get to learn and to listen to very impressive groups of people. That’s why I come again and again, next year again.

To participate, to join, to create this organization of Latino people so that it becomes bigger and becomes more known here, in the country, because that is very important. And we want, I think, that the Latino people, for the Afro-Latinos to have a voice here in the future... And that someday we can all be equal. Everybody, everybody, not depending on color, race, religion. Everyone.

When you attend events, you’re not just attending events. Your presence isn’t just to be there. Your presence is a form of accountability for the change that you’ve been saying that you want.



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THAT YOU WANT.**

LOOKING AND MOVING FORWARD.

While interviewees drew connections to past and present racialized challenges, many also said that they valued not only the discussion of new ideas, but also the future-focused tone of the activations, broadly:

We are in a time when it's shifting and it's looking towards more joy and how do we come together? How do we build, how do we create spaces where Black and Brown people can feel safe and feel celebrated? It is inspiring to me, not only as a person who grew up here, but also as a person who's raising her children and has a family here.

Boston's past and present are tied with segregation, this loud, bold and joyous celebration is a beginning of repairing some harm and inequity that persist.

FINDING INSPIRATION.

For many, the activations were especially meaningful because they did not dwell on problems, but celebrated community cultural wealth and prompted attendees to learn and work together to forge a new vision for Boston.⁴⁶ Attendees described how the exchange of ideas at the Juneteenth festival inspired them to investigate new possibilities and to apply them to their own lives and work:

I am happy and excited about applying some of the things that I can learn here to other facets of my life. I'm the head of a nonprofit and the board chair of a nonprofit, and I just think it's, I'm taking all these notes. This is some of the language that we should be using, this is how we should be thinking about things.

I think it's reassuring for me because there's something about those ideas that involve ground-up change and education and people are talking, but they're talking about realities. They have changed or they are changing. So to me that's what I try to do with my own practice. And really I draw energy and inspiration and a lot of nuances.

DISRUPTING DOMINANT NARRATIVES.

Many attendees noted that they appreciated how the events directly addressed the harms of white supremacy, yet they were happy that the spirit of the activations underscored the possibility of progress and creating new narratives. As one attendee put it, “it’s not about people understanding what’s happening. It’s about communities like this coming together and deciding we’re going to be collectively a part of a better future.” One attendee described how the event she attended helped to disrupt a dominant story that fails to recognize the presence of Black people in Boston, and tell a new story that affirmed and demonstrated the strength of that community:

I feel like a lot of people don’t see the Black community in Boston. They don’t really know that it’s there. So having these types of events that highlight it and bring everyone together from all corners of Boston and Cambridge is really important to just kind of showing that we are here. Small, but we’re here in Boston. So I think that’s very important.

Another respondent remarked on how the event offered attendees a hopeful story to counter commonly heard and difficult narratives:

Although the scriptures say in our faith is just the substance of things hopeful and the evidence of things not seen, Embrace is providing evidence, access to evidence of hopeful language, hopeful alternatives and hopeful content. That’s very, very spiritual.

By participating in events centered around Juneteenth and Afro-Latine culture, many of our respondents not only noted feeling joy, connectedness, and presence, but also relayed their belief that by taking part in the events, they were helping to amplify those stories and, thereby, build a new narrative:

I think having celebrations like this is acknowledging that we are here, we are part of the city, we are contributing [to] the city. We are contributing to the intellectual capital of the city, the cultural capital of the city and the financial capital of the city.

With the participation of the people in events like this, I imagine that these events will spread and become bigger and that they will be taken into account by the government, by the politicians and that we, the Latino people, the Afro-Latinos, will be taken into account in the whole country.

Attendees reported hearing new stories about who belongs in our city and who contributes to its thriving. Many said that showing up to events was an important way to change the story, one attendee added, “The more people partake in [celebratory gatherings] the more accountability it holds for us to continue to show up for each other and serve towards collective liberation.” By participating in events that celebrate Black and Brown life, attendees sought to help build the narrative that people of African descent are an invaluable part of our shared U.S. culture and that of the City of Boston.

Creating and telling stories that disrupt dominant narratives are central goals of Embrace Boston’s work. The interviews we conducted painted a compelling and emotionally resonant picture of how attendees heard and experienced these new narratives. In the following section, we reflect on how the effects of the narratives can ripple outwards from our activations, embed themselves in Greater Boston’s cultural and political consciousness, and craft the potential for transformational change and repair.



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REFLECTIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

A rightful sense of urgency exists around moving the needle on specific inequities tied to racism; disparities are well documented and reflect the durable, structural nature of white supremacy. Yet, achieving lasting change is a social process that must occur at multiple levels and requires caring for and sustaining the people and communities who are dedicated to making change happen.

How we think about the world comes not only from what we are told, but also from what we experience. To build more nuanced and complex understandings of who belongs and who matters, there must be multiple and sustained opportunities for people to *experience* new possibilities. For this reason, this report focuses specifically on the importance of curating convenings that serve as monuments to the movement for racial justice.

Given the national context of increasing racialized strife and nativism, generating and sustaining hope for the creation of a racially just and radically inclusive future are critical. To create a more inclusive city, there must be ways for racially minoritized people to engage in meaningful placemaking, such as the opportunities provided by cultural events and festivalscapes. This means “taking up space” in ways that are profound and liberatory—in ways that create belonging. For this work to be at its most effective, these intentionally planned gatherings must be reliable and recurring. Regular, in-person opportunities to engage around issues of racial justice are critical to disrupting and replacing the exclusionary social foundations on which the U.S. was built. As such, we argue that ensuring the availability of opportunities to gather and convene at cultural events is an important way of developing a radically inclusive social infrastructure.

PICTURED ON PREVIOUS PAGE. The Hamilton-Garrett Drumline opened the day at Massó “¡Con Salsa!” and set the tone for a musical gathering grounded in joy, reflection, and connection.

Both public and private organizations play an important role in developing and sustaining a city's social infrastructure. While the research for this project was conducted at a series of Embrace Boston cultural activations, our findings are consistent with what other researchers have discovered studying arts and culture festivals around the globe. The main contribution of this study lies in the specific attention it pays to the value of cultural events organized by and for people who have been historically and contemporarily minoritized in the U.S.

We anticipate that other arts and cultural events put on by organizations focused on advancing racial and social justice would achieve similar results. The findings of this report suggest that arts and cultural organizations should consider how their own work can and does contribute to the larger effort to sustain the movement for racial justice. We also anticipate that events and gatherings have a profound effect on the social fabric of the cities and neighborhoods in which they take place. In addition, this report suggests that city planners and placemaking organizations should prioritize cultural spaces and events as tools to advance a vibrant and inclusive city. Highlighting the progressive potential of the arts in times when traditional means of advancing racial justice are being curtailed or eliminated is more important than ever.

We believe that when different stories about who belongs here take root, Boston can and will move beyond its reputation as a city defined by racism and fulfill its potential of being “the testing ground for the ideals of freedom.”⁴⁷ We believe that when their presence is affirmed, their contributions are celebrated, and like-minded people surround them, activists, artists, and changemakers of color stay and make Boston their home. The events and spaces that nurture belonging and empathy are vital components of our civic commons—serving as foundational building blocks for the radically inclusive society and healthy democracy we all deserve.

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RECOMMENDATIONS

The suppression of the culture, symbols, and personhood of people of African descent has been a modality through which white supremacy has operated in Boston since the city's establishment as a settler colony.⁴⁸ Given the findings of this research, we suggest that municipalities, private supporters of the arts, as well as individuals and organizations committed to the vision of a racially just society consider the following recommendations:

1 It is necessary to create spaces where the dignity and community cultural wealth of Black people are centered.

This serves to repair the harm inflicted upon Black and Afro-Latine Bostonians throughout the Commonwealth's history of chattel slavery and institutionalized racial discrimination. To accomplish this, public and private sector support for the creation of places for artistic and cultural community expression is necessary. Through facilitating opportunities to celebrate and experience the cultural traditions of Black people, new narratives about our city and commonwealth can emerge.

2 It is crucially important that people with roots in the communities and with lived expertise act as leaders, decision makers, creators, and curators.

Arts and culture leaders should continue to lean on traditions of music, dance, storytelling, and celebration to create meaningful spaces. Doing so will help attendees of all backgrounds to draw connections to history and recognize their roles in making change. Whether this means hiring or promoting staff who are people of color, convening and compensating community members to lend their expertise, or consulting experts of color throughout the planning process, having the right people at the helm can amplify the reach and impact of cultural convenings.

3 Sustainable placemaking that supports a robust and inclusive social infrastructure requires reliable rather than one-off investments.

To effectively mobilize artistic and cultural production, there must be a range of opportunities on which community members can rely. Recurring events that are welcoming and inclusive can become important parts of the city's social infrastructure. In these spaces, residents can build their social networks—bonding with those they already know and building bridges with new connections.

4

Partnerships are the foundation on which arts and cultural activations aimed at building a radically inclusive society are built.

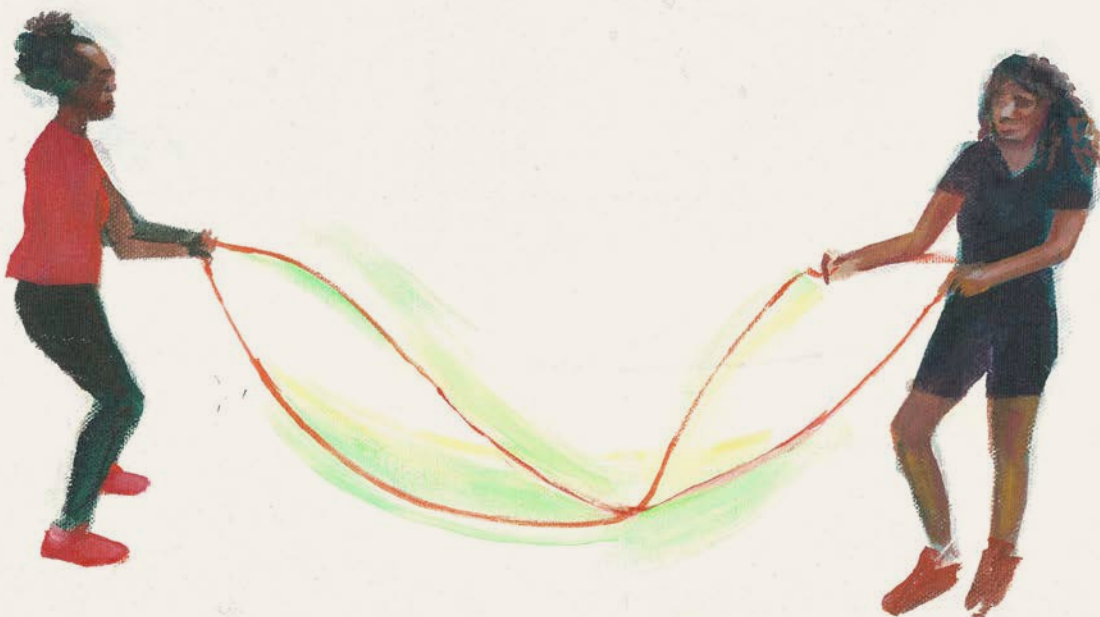
In *My Grandmother's Hands*, Resmaa Menakem reminds us that healing the historical trauma of white supremacy is a collective process as much as an individual one.⁴⁹ To disrupt dominant narratives about a place and people necessitates a deep understanding of the history and context within which a specific event is located, along with partners who share that vision. Partnerships with municipal officials in use of public spaces and resources; with community organizations to host events or spread the word; with the local business and hospitality community to identify vendors and support small businesses; with scholars and the academic community to shape the content and messaging of an event—these are the collaborations at the core of successful racial justice interventions.

5

It is necessary, although resource-intensive, to understand how a city's social infrastructure can create: belonging, narrative change, and movement-building capacity.

Both municipalities and private organizations should support artists and arts organizations that can leverage cultural knowledge in the service of achieving economic and racial justice; all of those involved should all be concerned with generating and measuring outcomes. Traditional evaluation metrics may be ill-equipped to effectively capture such embodied and affective experience, but this reflects the limitations of those metrics more than the immeasurability of those experiences. The methods employed in this study—namely interviews with those most directly affected, in the moment of their experience, conducted in their preferred language by interviewers with roots in similar communities—represent one possible form measurement efforts could take.

Art by Beatriz Whitehall



RECOMMENDATIONS BY SECTOR

Arts and Culture Leaders

- ▶ Continue to uplift cultural traditions and expression as critical sites of placemaking, and support the stewards of those traditions.
- ▶ Seek resources so that such events, programming, and community engagement initiatives are recurring and sustainable.
- ▶ Holistically demonstrate and broadcast evidence of the short- and long-term impact of culture and the arts in building social infrastructure.

Public and Private Sector City Leadership

- ▶ Hire and promote staff who are people of color, convene and compensate community members who advise on the implementation of arts and culture programming.
- ▶ Ensure that opportunities for racially minoritized communities to celebrate and take up space are recurring and sustainable.
- ▶ Consider cultural gatherings and art as important contributors to local economies and thriving neighborhoods.

Public and Private Funders

- ▶ Support individuals and organizations that can leverage cultural knowledge and community relationships in the service of economic and racial justice.
- ▶ Give in ways and amounts that enable these organizations to sustain their impact and meaningfully build an inclusive social infrastructure.
- ▶ Invest in creative, innovative strategies to measure the impact of racial justice work and narrative change.

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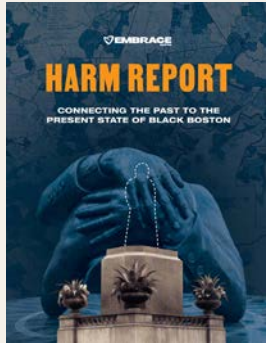
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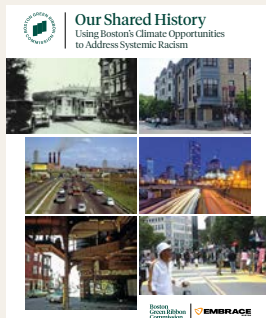


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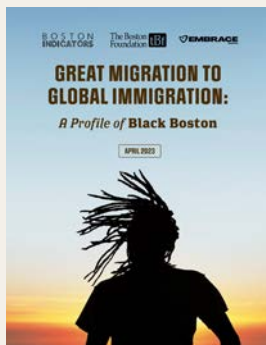


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