



JUNE TEENTH

**EDUCATE, ENGAGE, EMPOWER:
RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF CHAOS**



A COMMUNITY CELEBRATION & DIALOGUE

June 21, 2025 | The Beehive | Los Angeles



THE INSTITUTE FOR NONVIOLENCE LOS ANGELES

DAYS OF DIALOGUE

is proud to support the Empowerment Congress as a
SIGNATURE SPONSOR

“If you can’t fly, then run.
If you can’t run, then walk.
If you can’t walk, then crawl.
But whatever you do,
you have to keep moving forward”.





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PROJECT DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

VINCENT M. HARRIS

EDUCATE. ENGAGE. EMPOWER.

The observance of Juneteenth is a signature activity of the Empowerment Congress. It serves as a vehicle to build and reinforce the bonds of community among civic engagement activists.

The Empowerment Congress is part of a broader civic engagement movement of citizens and residents who care about both their neighbors and their neighborhoods, their families and their friends, their colleagues and their co-workers, their communities and their country, their planet and their humanity.

WHAT IS CIVIC ENGAGEMENT?

Civic engagement is the active participation in public life, community service and the political process to promote social justice locally and globally. Civic engagement activists build community. We show up. We speak out. We attend city council meetings and town halls. We write letters and give testimony at board of supervisors' meetings. We sign petitions and engage in non-violent direct action. We employ empathy, values, and ethics to regulate our interaction with one another. Civic engagement fosters a sense of reciprocal accountability—the shared responsibility to achieve desired community outcomes and social justice. Civic engagement practices intentional civility—the respectful, appropriate and effective communication and behavior necessary for collaboration, even when there is disagreement. Civic engagement is the contemporary expression of the philosophy of non-violence in the public sphere.

The Empowerment Congress brings our mission, to “Educate, Engage and Empower,” to our brand of civic engagement and community building. Our programs and activities are designed to ensure that our celebrations and gatherings are substantive. We use facilitated dialogues to deepen that substance by way of listening to what others think—respecting differing views among us without losing sight of the ethos of unity.

“EDUCATE, ENGAGE, EMPOWER: Resilience in the Face of Chaos” is this year's theme for Juneteenth. The role resiliency plays in these unsettling times is part of our legacy. The newly freed aspired to create community in the face of the chaos they experienced in the immediate aftermath of emancipation. They survived unsettling and bewildering challenges, many times worse than today's chaos. Their resilience is the foundation upon which we must build in pursuit of a more perfect union. Those brave souls harnessed the emancipatory spirit of Juneteenth.

A proper celebration of Juneteenth requires that we place intentional civility at the center of our civic engagement efforts. We must promote conversations that model civility in the process of building the Beloved Community to which the newly freed of the 19th century aspired. We must use our agency, both collectively and individually, to construct a more just and humane society, in which participatory democracy, servant leadership and social responsibility are cherished and respected values. These are the hallmarks of resilience.

Let's use civic engagement as the practice that equips us in sorting through the chaos.



AGENDA

PLENARY SESSION CALL TO ORDER

9:00 am

- I. **Opening Performance:**
Rhythm Arts Alliance
- II. **Welcome**
Tavis Smiley, KBLA Talk 1580
- III. **Empowerment Congress Co-Chairs**
Gloria J. Davis & Harry McElroy
- IV. **Keynote**
Maya Wiley, President and
CEO of The Leadership Conference
on Civil & Human Rights and The
Leadership Conference Education Fund
- V. **Performance**
The Young Shakespeareans



DIALOGUE

9:55 am

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

11:30 am



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BIOGRAPHIES



TAVIS SMILEY

Tavis Smiley is the host of “Tavis Smiley” on KBLA Talk 1580, the flagship radio station of SmileyAudioMedia, Inc. Smiley is a bestselling author, advocate, and philanthropist known and respected for his unapologetic progressivism. He is the recipient of nearly 20 honorary doctorate degrees, has been honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, and recognized by TIME magazine as one of the world’s “100 Most Influential People.”



MAYA WILEY

Maya Wiley is the president and CEO of The Leadership Conference on Civil & Human Rights and The Leadership Conference Education Fund. A nationally respected civil rights attorney, she has been a litigator and a program creator and policy advocate in philanthropy, non-profits, government, and higher education.

Prior to taking the helm of the Leadership Conference, Ms. Wiley ran for Mayor in 2021, garnering the second highest number of first choice votes in a rank choice vote election. In 2014, she became the first Black woman to be Counsel to a New York City Mayor, Bill deBlasio, where she worked to protect and expand civil rights, Minority and Women-Owned Business contracts and broadband access. Wiley became a Senior Vice President for Social Justice at the New School University, where she also founded the Digital Equity Laboratory. While there, she chaired the New York City Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB). As chair, she led the release of the “hold” on proceedings against Daniel Pantaleo whose illegal chokehold killed Eric Garner, and also Co-Chaired the Mayor’s School Diversity Advisory Group that authored two major reports on integrating New York City public schools.

Wiley has been a litigator at the ACLU, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Inc, and the US Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York. She helped create a criminal justice program for a major foundation in South Africa. Wiley co-founded and led a national policy advocacy organization, the Center for Social Inclusion, now a part of Race Forward, a national policy strategy organization working to end structural racism. Wiley has received numerous awards, and has been a public voice for rights, justice and democracy, through written opinion editorials and as a former legal analyst for NBC News and MSNBC. Wiley is the author of the memoir, *Remember You Are A Wiley*.



WHAT IS JUNETEENTH?

Schools across America teach that “Abraham Lincoln freed the slaves” when the Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863. This complex document strategically granted freedom to the enslaved Black people, specifically in Confederate states not under Union military control as of the Proclamation’s date. Though the Emancipation Proclamation is lauded as a critical document for human freedom, its conditions made the true emancipation of enslaved Black people extremely challenging.

The provisions in the Emancipation Proclamation that offered freedom to Black slaves were directly related to the hope for a Union victory over the Confederacy in the Civil War. President Lincoln expressly offered freedom to those who were enslaved in states that had seceded from the Union, except for those territories that had (at the time of the Proclamation) surrendered to Union power. It is no wonder, then, that slaves in Texas were not informed of the Emancipation Proclamation until June 19, 1865, when General Gordon Granger issued General Order No. 3, declaring the institution of slavery dead in Texas.

Though the official abolition of slavery, as practiced in the United States and the Atlantic Slave Trade, came with the ratification of the 13th Amendment on December 6, 1865, Juneteenth marks a critical milestone on the journey to emancipation. Juneteenth is cited as the oldest known celebration commemorating the end of slavery in the United States, with its start in 1866 in Texas. Today, we continue to celebrate this monumental step in the journey to freedom with celebration, thoughtfulness, and an ongoing commitment to reaching true emancipation.

RESOURCES

- Emancipation Proclamation: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/emancipation-proclamation>
- General Order No. 3: <https://www.archives.gov/news/articles/juneteenth-original-document>
- 13th Amendment: <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/13th-amendment>
- Juneteenth Digital Toolkit: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/juneteenth-digital-toolkit>

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JUNETEENTH ANCESTRAL ALTAR



Ancestral altars are common across many cultures in the world. Anyone can create an altar without being religious or spiritual. Altars are a sacred space to honor and pay homage to your ancestors spiritually, often serving as a form of gratitude. Items placed in an altar are typically objects that remind and/or represent our ancestors including heirlooms, photos, candles, food offerings and flowers.

SPECIAL THANKS TO LA COMMONS

for installing the ancestral altar for the
2025 EC Juneteenth Dialogue & Celebration.

EVENT PARTNERS

Special thanks to our program participants, EC members, volunteers, staff, event partners, sponsors and vendors.



DIALOGUE OVERVIEW AND QUESTIONS

<https://daysofdialogue.org>

HISTORY OF DAYS OF DIALOGUE

In 1995, Los Angeles' deeply divided reaction to the verdict in the criminal trial of O. J. Simpson underscored how far apart the diverse communities of Los Angeles and the nation stand on some basic issues. As a result, then - Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas called together a meeting of civic leaders and community activists to diffuse escalating tensions. Out of this was born an innovative, non-partisan initiative, Los Angeles's first citywide discussion —A Day of Dialogue on Race Relations.

Since then, thousands of people, both locally and nationally, have participated in Days of Dialogue programs; from political Town Hall forums in large civic auditoriums, to small group meetings in neighborhood libraries, schools, churches, and fire stations.

GUIDELINES

The following have proven very useful in creating an environment for honest and productive dialogue.



Speak openly and honestly



Trust that the facilitator has the best interests of the group at heart



Listen carefully and respectfully to each person



Silence cell phones (unless the group agrees otherwise)



Explore differences respectfully and look for common ground



Be respectful of the opinions of others

QUESTIONS

What does resilience mean in the context of chaos?

What tools of resilience have we inherited and from whom/where (legacy) that are applicable today?



Remaining questions will be provided during the event.

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EMPOWERMENT CONGRESS DESCRIPTION

After more than three decades, the Empowerment Congress (EC) continues to empower and engage all members of our diverse communities to ensure our collective voice is heard by:

- Encouraging and enlisting full participation from our community to improve our quality of life;
- Educating and informing our community on how the government works;
- Developing strategies that shape policy and legislation; and
- Connecting our community with public resources

The EC is a distinctive and deliberate national model of civic engagement built on the core principles of participatory democracy, reciprocal accountability, and intentional civility. Founded in 1992 by Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas, the EC is a dynamic partnership among neighborhood groups, residents, nonprofit organizations, businesses, religious institutions, and community leaders within diverse communities. A precursor to the City of Los Angeles' Neighborhood Councils, the EC is an ongoing effort in participatory government, founded on the tenet that elected officials are most effective when the constituents they serve are actively involved in the decision-making process.

The EC provides unique opportunities for the community to be heard and engaged on issues that directly impact their quality of life. Our ongoing programming and partnerships generate dialogue that encourages and lays the foundation for economic, social, and political justice.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Empowerment Congress's work is driven by the following guiding principles that serve as the foundation for our community engagement strategies.

- **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT:** Active participation in public life, community service, and the political process to promote social justice locally and globally, while employing empathy, ethics, values, and a sense of social responsibility.
- **EMPOWERMENT:** The notion that individuals gain power by engaging and becoming active in their communities and their government; and that power, in and of itself, does not exist in isolation, nor is it inherent in individuals, but is created in the following relationship types: individual, familial, communal, and political.
- **INTENTIONAL CIVILITY:** Appropriate and effective communication and behavior to engage community stakeholders with respect and in a spirit of collaboration, even when there is disagreement.
- **SERVANT LEADERSHIP:** A demonstrated focus on helping and attending to the needs of others; use of certain abilities or gifts to serve as an instrument for the benefit and improvement of society. Servant leadership is fundamentally about service rather than power or ego.
- **PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY:** Active participation and advocacy in the democratic process to confront and address systemic inequities, achieve social justice, and cause positive change.
- **RECIPROCAL ACCOUNTABILITY:** The collective and shared responsibility of community stakeholders and elected officials to achieve desired community outcomes and social justice.



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“Change does not roll in on the
wheels of inevitability, but comes
through continuous struggle.”



**UNITED WAY OF
GREATER LOS ANGELES**

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“Faith is taking the first
step even when you can’t
see the whole staircase.”





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“But somewhere I read of the freedom of assembly. Somewhere I read of the freedom of speech. Somewhere I read of the freedom of press. Somewhere I read that the greatness of America is the right to protest for right. And so just as I say we aren’t going to let any dogs or water hoses turn us around, we aren’t going to let any injunction turn us around. We are going on. We need all of you.”

