



K-TOWN'92

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TOOLKIT

A multi-media project by **GRACE LEE**

KTOWN92.COM

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

“When the LA riots/uprising/civil unrest exploded in 1992, images of destruction beamed across the globe with little context as to why these events had occurred. TV news focused on African Americans, Latinos, and Koreans as both victims and perpetrators of violence, and footage of the “first multicultural riots” locked each group within a stereotype.

—GRACE LEE, PROJECT DIRECTOR

I. INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE PROJECT



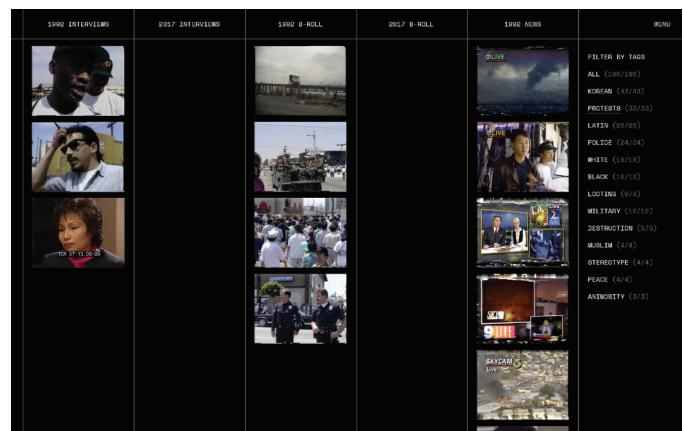
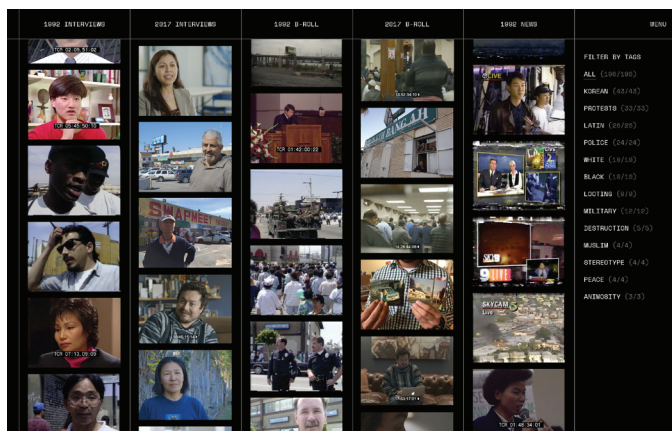
Peabody award-winning independent filmmaker **GRACE LEE** has created a groundbreaking documentary project to explore the impact and legacy of the 1992 Los Angeles riots, 25 years later. **K-TOWN '92** presents a collection of new and untold stories—including new interviews, previously unseen archival news footage, and a short documentary film—all in an immersive online experience.

INTERACTIVE DOCUMENTARY WEBSITE:

The website allows users to create their own media experiences through what Lee calls a “deconstructed documentary” approach. There are thousands of untold stories about the 1992 civil unrest, but mainstream media often falls back on those that are reinforced by the news footage and narrative prominent in 1992. **K-TOWN '92** provides a process of discovery for new perspectives and an interactive experience to power the users journey, reframing the narrative in the neighborhood of Koreatown.

Featuring new interviews from around Los Angeles. The site surfaces stories of the civil unrest that were overlooked by the media coverage at the time. Curated selections of archival TV news footage will round out the experience. Visitors to **K-TOWN '92** select from a mosaic of characters and prompts that enable them to explore the footage clip by clip — building their own documentary as they go.

Who gets to tell the story of Los Angeles in 1992? The explosion of anger and disorder didn't begin with Rodney King. **K-TOWN '92** seeks to understand the larger forces that drove the civil unrest and expand our understanding of it from communities of color whose stories have not been widely heard.



SITE INDEX

ABOUT THE PROJECT

SHORT FILM: K-TOWN '92: REPORTERS

As a companion piece to the interactive documentary website, *K-TOWN '92: Reporters* is a short documentary film that explores media coverage at the city's paper of record during the 1992 civil unrest. Hector Tobar, Tammerlin Drummond, and John Lee reported from the field for the Los Angeles Times. Twenty-five years later, they revisit their stories and impressions of those tumultuous events, and reflect on the media coverage they helped to create.

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

This brief toolkit summarizes the recommended activities and available materials for community-based organizations, families, and individuals to use in conjunction with **K-TOWN'92** website and video content. All partners are encouraged to be creative and come up with their own distinct ways to use the content.

For those interested in turnkey activities and different perspectives on how to leverage the interactive documentary website and the short film, this guide will be a handy reference.

Please note that this guide uses the terms civil unrest, uprising, rebellion, riots, etc. interchangeably in this document to refer the incidents of 1992.

MEDIA CONTENT

K-TOWN '92

DOCUMENTARY WEBSITE, K-TOWN '92:

KTOWN92.COM

SHORT FILM, K-TOWN '92 REPORTERS:

WORLDCHANNEL.ORG/PROGRAMS/EPISODE/K-TOWN-92/

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK.COM/KTOWN92DOC/
INSTAGRAM.COM/KTOWN92DOC/
TWITTER.COM/KTOWN92DOC

BACKGROUND ON THE 1992 LOS ANGELES RIOTS

The 1992 Los Angeles riots are considered to be the largest instance of urban civil unrest in American history. Sparked by a “not-guilty” verdict in the trial of four police officers that were captured on video severely beating Rodney King, the riots are broadly understood to reflect deeper social and economic tensions that intersect with race, immigration, and a history of aggressive policing in South Central LA.

FROM CNN.COM - CNN.COM/2013/09/18/US/LOS-ANGELES-RIOTS-FAST-FACTS/

- The riots over five days in the spring of 1992 left more than 50 people dead, and more than 2,000 injured.
- The rioting destroyed or damaged over 1,000 buildings in the Los Angeles area. The estimated cost of the damages was over \$1 billion.
- More than 9,800 California National Guard troops were dispatched to restore order, along with 1,100 Marines and 600 Army soldiers
- Nearly 12,000 people were arrested, though not all the arrests were directly related to the rioting.

FROM LATIMES.COM - TIMELINES.LATIMES.COM/LOS-ANGELES-RIOTS/

The LA Times offers a day-by-day timeline of the most important events associated with the 1992 unrest, beginning with the police beating of Rodney King on March 3, 1991 and culminating with his death at 47 years old on June 17, 2012.

BACKGROUND ON THE 1992 LOS ANGELES RIOTS



ASIAN AMERICANS AND THE 1992 LOS ANGELES RIOTS/ UPRISING,

BY SHELLY SANG-HEE LEE FOR AMERICAN HISTORY,
OXFORD RESEARCH ENCYCLOPEDIAS

[AMERICANHISTORY.OXFORDRE.COM/VIEW/10.1093/](https://americanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/ACREFORE/9780199329175.001.0001/ACREFORE-9780199329175-E-15)

[ACREFORE/9780199329175.001.0001/ACREFORE-9780199329175-E-15](https://americanhistory.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/ACREFORE/9780199329175.001.0001/ACREFORE-9780199329175-E-15)

Although the 1992 Los Angeles riots have been described as a “race riot” sparked by the acquittals of a group of mostly White police officers charged with excessively beating Black motorist Rodney King, the widespread targeting and destruction of Asian-owned (mainly Korean) property in and around South Central Los Angeles stands out as one of the most striking aspects of the uprising. For all the commentary generated about the state of Black-White relations, African American youths, and the decline of America’s inner cities, the riots also gave many Americans their first awareness of the presence of a Korean immigrant population in Southern California, a large number of Korean shop owners, and the existence of what was commonly framed as the “Black-Korean conflict.” For Korean Americans, and Asian Americans more generally, the Los Angeles riots represented a shattered “American dream” and brought focus to their tenuous hold on economic mobility and social inclusion in a society fraught by racial and ethnic tension. The riots furthermore marked a turning point that placed Asian immigrants and Asian Americans at the center of new conversations about social relations in a multiracial America, the place of new immigrants, and the responsibilities of relatively privileged minorities toward the less privileged.

LA ‘92: FROM CIVIL UNREST TO COMMUNITY POWER,

BY SYLVIA CASTILLO FOR THE PRAXIS PROJECT

[THEPRAXISPROJECT.ORG/LOS-ANGELES-1992-RIOTS-FROM-CIVIL-UNREST-TO-COMMUNITY-POWER/](https://thepraxisproject.org/los-angeles-1992-riots-from-civil-unrest-to-community-power/)

The media interchangeably framed the civil unrest as a race war, a Black riot, and a targeted attack on Koreans and the Los Angeles Police Department by the African American community. Latinos were dropped from the story. So was the fact that the unrest was a rainbow rebellion that spread far from South Los Angeles and included actions in Hollywood, West Los Angeles, Long Beach, Compton and Inglewood.

In reality, one-third of those who were killed and more than one-half of those arrested in the upheaval were Latino. Moreover, between 20% and 40% of the businesses that were looted were owned by Latinos, according to Latinos Futures Research Group.



PLANNING FOR AN ENGAGEMENT EVENT ACTIVITIES

As a multi-platform digital media project, **K-TOWN '92** seeks to engage viewers and users in thoughtful discussion and reflection on one of the most poignant and significant moments of civil unrest in our country's history.

The '92 civil unrest is not the only such event in living memory, but is unique in that it involved multiple ethnic groups, sometimes seemingly on opposing sides of intersecting lines of community conflict.

The result has been a dominant narrative of Black and Brown crime against largely White victims, while the often more subtle—and more revealing—intersections of Latinos, Korean Americans, African Americans and other community groups have been largely ignored.

K-TOWN '92 invites community organizations, faith base groups, and all audiences of conscience to use the website and short-form film content to **engage in deep community reflection and dialogue about the narratives in mainstream media**. In community, **evaluate what stories are told, who gets to tell them, and express your story unfiltered by rhetoric, stereotypes, or dated tropes**.

III. PLANNING FOR AN ENGAGEMENT EVENT ACTIVITIES

USING K-TOWN'92 FOR HOME OR COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

The **K-TOWN'92** website and corresponding 15 minute short film are excellent tools for conversation and further exploration. Whether you work in a community organization, volunteer with a local group, or are interested in exploring the issues raised by the project among family and friends, the following section provides details on how to gather, engage, and follow-up with those you choose to invite or include in your project.

Because **K-TOWN'92** is a multi-layered documentary project, consider whether you might like to have your audience or participants independently explore the content on KTOWN92.COM, or whether you will project content from the website or the short film for joint viewing during your gathering. Either or both will work.

HOSTING A COMMUNITY EVENT FEATURING K-TOWN'92



WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- An invitation list
 - » small event, 10-49 people
 - » medium event, 50-149
 - » large event, 150+
- A space to gather that includes ample seating and audiovisual equipment, one of the following:
 - » Computers and headphones for website exploration (please note KTOWN92.COM does not work on mobile devices), and wifi connectivity
 - » Film projection, audio/sound, a laptop, and wifi connectivity
- An RSVP system, consider a free web based option such as eventbrite.com
- Refreshments always make for a better event!
- Consider printing out the list of resources at the end of this document to share with your guests

III. PLANNING FOR AN ENGAGEMENT EVENT ACTIVITIES

HOSTING A COMMUNITY EVENT FEATURING K-TOWN'92

A FEW GENERAL TIPS:

- Please note that RSVP drop-off should be expected. A typical medium or large event will have an RSVP drop-off of 30-50 percent. For this reason, you may want to collect more RSVPs than you have seating available.
- Provide relevant logistical information to guests such as directions and parking locations

Be ready for the unexpected: when you are hosting a live event, anything can happen from power outages to equipment failures to an unexpected illness by a guest speaker. Remember that guests are normally forgiving and supportive of these little snafus, especially if you keep your sense of humor and communicate with your audience!

THE BASICS FOR A COMMUNITY EVENT

This worksheet offers a step-by-step guide to producing a modestly sized community event, perhaps at a church, community center, library, or a cafe. Organizing should begin about two months out. Give yourself at least eight weeks to plan and promote your event.

STEP 1: PLAN AND SECURE

- ☐ Select a timeframe and date for your event
- ☐ Review this guide, and familiarize yourself with the media content

STEP 2: WHO TO INVITE?

- ☐ Begin compiling your invitation list. Use your own address book; and ask some friends or colleagues for their recommendations. Be sure to ask permission to send an e-blast at work, or to clubs/organizations you belong to
- ☐ Make sure your invitation list is a reasonable size given how many people you can seat

STEP 3: REACH OUT (TWO OR THREE WEEKS PRIOR TO EVENT)

- ☐ Draft and send an e-mail invitation to your list
- ☐ Create a social media presence for your event
 - » Be sure to link to your event RSVP page
- ☐ Monitor your RSVP list to track who is attending

THE BASICS FOR A COMMUNITY EVENT

STEP 4: CREATE PROGRAM

- ☐ Create an agenda for your screening (see examples on next page)
- ☐ Be sure to test wifi connectivity in your space for screening media content

STEP 5: FOLLOW-UP

- ☐ Three or four days prior to the event, send a reminder to everyone you invited, and ask them to RSVP. For guests that have already RSVP'd reconfirm their attendance

STEP 6: DAY OF SCREENING

- ☐ Arrange your furniture so seating faces the screen with clear sight lines
- ☐ Put out refreshments for your guests before or after the presentation
- ☐ Have a camera at the ready to take some snapshots of your event and share on social media [@KTOWN92DOC](#)

SAMPLE AGENDA

You can choose to embellish this agenda and make it your own, but try not to run too long. In general, no event should last longer than two hours, including activities and discussion, unless there is a larger formal program to execute.

6:30PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Doors Open II. Guests Arrive III. Snacks & Refreshments are available
7:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IV. Gather your guests and explain why you wanted to host the event V. Start with a few "quick takes" or an activity to get the audience comfortable and talking to one another
7:20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VI. Watch K-TOWN '92 Reporters or instruct guests on how to connect to ktown92.com
7:40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VII. Use this guide to lead your panelists and guests through a conversation about the themes presented by K-TOWN '92 and/or K-TOWN '92 Reporters
8:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> VIII. Closing remarks; remind guests to follow K-TOWN '92 online. Wish guests a goodnight!

WARM-UP ACTIVITIES

Different activities appeal to different people. Think about your group or audience and try to identify a way to get them more deeply engaged with the content and issues. The activities presented here can be done exactly as described, or they can be customized to suit your needs.

We encourage you to include at least one activity in your gathering, to be sure your guests have an engaging experience.

QUICK TAKES – You can use these simple polls as a way to warm up your audience, get them thinking about the content in personal terms, and as a way to learn a little about the group or audience you are working with. Simply let the group know you are going to ask some questions to get a sense of the people in the room and the collective memory available for the discussion.

For each question, ask for a show of hands by those who identify with the question:

1. How many of you remember the 1992 riots?
2. What name do you use to describe the riots?
 - » The LA Riots
 - » The LA Uprising
 - » The 1992 Riots
 - » The Rodney King Riots
 - » Civil Unrest
 - » Sa-I-Gu
3. How many of you have a personal or family story related to the unrest of 1992?

Following this question, invite audience members or guests to turn to someone they don't know (if the room allows, invite guest to get up and move around the room). Ask them to introduce themselves, and recall a story or experience they have about the riots. If a guest was too young, out of the country, or has no personal story to share, invite them to share what they have heard or know about the riots.

For smaller groups, instead of turning to their seatmate, invite each person to share their story or perspective on the events. This may spark conversation—go with it, but remember to save enough time to view content and for other activities (below).

FRAMING THE EVENT

Below is a short list of frames, or approaches to consider when organizing a screening and discussion event. This list is not intended to be all encompassing or exhaustive, and everyone is encouraged to develop the right approach for his or her community.

Each approach, or frame, offers a pathway for organizing an event around a goal, which is stated in the title of each approach. Different approaches might lead to different sets of panelists, different themes for conversation, and different sets of resources and materials available at the event or activities to enrich conversation and learning.

Additionally, while these suggested approaches are offered as potential frames for a screening and discussion event, they can also inspire many different kinds of gatherings or projects.

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE 1992 CIVIL UNREST

Having just passed the 25th anniversary of the uprising, a generation has grown-up with no personal memories of the riots. Other than hearing stories through family or media, your audience may not have a nuanced understanding of what occurred. This approach offers an important opportunity for younger generations to learn from their elders, who lived through the era, and represents a strong opportunity for intergenerational learning.

Sample Panel:

- An academic with expertise in race relations and/or expertise on civil unrest
- An organization that originated in response to the civil unrest, or has a mission focus of addressing the issues that lead-up to the riots
- A youth panelist who has some connection by family or community to the events that occurred

Discussion Questions:

- Do recent events in this country come to mind after watching **K-TOWN'92**
- What is your memory of the unrest? What have you been told about the riots?
- How did the riots impact your community? Did anything change?
- How/why is the civil unrest still relevant today?
- What are the greatest lessons from the uprising?
- What issues relevant to '92 are we still struggling with today?

FRAMING THE EVENT

For smaller groups or for sessions that will not include panelists or guest speakers, consider using the discussion questions in various ways.

- Invite a different participant to lead a brief discussion about each of the questions above, beginning with his or her own opinion or recollections
- Ask each guest or participant to respond to a different questions
- Decide together which question(s) to discuss and in what order

2. WHO GETS TO TELL THE STORY?

Coverage of the riots often focused on tensions between the Black and Korean communities and seldom contextualized the tensions and events leading up to the riots including relations between police and the public, economic inequalities within immigrant and Black communities, and historical policies leading to disenfranchisement of communities.

Additionally, newsrooms often rely on “official actors” such as police and elected officials to shape media coverage of controversial and racialized events, such as the LA riots and Hurricane Katrina. This means that the average “person on the street” is rarely given voice or an opportunity to share nuance from the community level.

Sample Panel:

- A media expert such as a local newspaper editor or journalism professor
- A reporter for a local minority or ethnic publication
- A reporter whose beat covers issues of race and community relations

Discussion Questions:

- Hector Tobar, LA Times reporter, said “A lot of us reporters of color were sent out to do the street reporting. And I think it’s a really natural tendency of a person in charge, as an editor, to say, ‘Let’s send someone who’s less likely to get beaten up.’” What do you think about this statement and the decision that an editor has to make about who and how a story gets told?
- In News footage from ‘92 showing looting, two anchors discuss the footage and say the “majority don’t mind being shown on camera” and “in fact some take great delight in it, ...he’s having a good time.” What do you believe is the impact of this type of commentary on news footage?
- Tammerlin Drummond spoke about young reporters of color being treated as cannon fodder. Is there an obligation to have a story about a particular group be reported on by a member of that community? What if this story is dangerous?
- Is it enough to report on the facts? How much time or energy should go into providing historical context for a story? To what end and how often did every story about the riots need to talk about systemic injustice?

FRAMING THE EVENT

For smaller groups or for sessions that will not include panelists or guest speakers, consider the following alternatives:

- Ask each participant (or invite them to discuss in pairs or small groups) to list five media outlets that they regularly read/watch/follow; invite each person to list their preferred outlets; record them, tallying up those that are mentioned more than once; discuss the diversity or other characteristics of the collective media picture for those in the room.
- Ask each guest or participant to describe how **K-TOWN'92** content affects their perception of the media coverage of major events

3. HOW DOES THE MEDIA PORTRAY KOREAN AMERICAN AND OTHER COMMUNITIES OF COLOR?

In **K-TOWN '92 REPORTERS**, John Lee says that the “image of the armed Korean merchant protecting their business is the lasting image and one of the only images that survived the riots. I feel that’s what the mainstream media was able to afford Koreans as far as characterization.”

Sample Panel:

- A local academic/historian with expertise on relation between communities of color
- A media expert such as a local newspaper editor or journalism professor
- A media literacy expert
- A community organizer/storyteller

Discussion Questions:

- In what way do you think stereotypes and preconceptions play a role in the way writers, reporters and editors portrayed the communities of color and relations amongst these diverse groups?
- John Lee explained that “once a story is kind of coined, the news editors are looking for the elements of that story to reoccur.” Why do you think it was so difficult for mainstream press to make room for an accurate portrayal of the Korean community and Korean-Black relations? What do you think goes into portraying a community through the media? What would be necessary of a news organization to accurately portray a community of color?
- In a street interview with a young Black man at the intersection of 7th and Slauson in '92 said, “We have constantly been portrayed as animals... the negative images, the movies, the stereotypes, is constantly being reinforced, and unfortunately besides harming us, a great deal of the white minority...is sentenced in away, ...’cause a lot of us now have nothing to lose.” What do you think of this man’s characterizations of media coverage? Can media coverage sentence any group of society?

FRAMING THE EVENT

For smaller groups or for sessions that will not include panelists or guest speakers, consider the following alternatives:

- Ask each guest or participant to describe a recent media story where they felt a stereotype was being reinforced or relied upon
- Identify a recent news story where you feel that stereotypes were in play, and provide it to your participants (in advance via e-mail or in printed form onsite) for discussion during your gathering; consider the story given what you have learned about media coverage from **K-TOWN'92**

A NOTE ABOUT MANAGING THE CONVERSATION

A robust conversation about the film and the issues are an important part of your evening. Make sure you have plenty of time for discussion, and that you provide ample opportunity for your audience to engage and express themselves. Use the discussion questions featured in this guide to get things started.

For events with a single guest speaker, you may choose to have remarks either before or after the film. In either case, make sure to leave some time after the film for the audience to share and ask questions.

If your event features a panel discussion, be sure to select a moderator who has some experience managing a public discussion. The moderator frames the discussion with questions, recognizes whose turn it is to speak, and fields questions from the audience and directs them to the panelists.

Remember to give everyone an opportunity to share their perspective, and welcome all view points (even when you disagree). If you anticipate a hostile crowd, or one where you know there will be very disparate opinions, your moderator may elect to establish ground rules before opening up to audience Q&A. Some possible rules include:

- Ask audience members to wait until called upon
- Remarks should be kept brief to allow as many people an opportunity to speak as possible
- Moderator can reserve the right to move on if a question/comment isn't related to the discussion at hand

For smaller groups, the rules of good conversation are less rigid, but remain important for a healthy discussion that is supportive of all participants.

- Remind everyone to be generous with their listening as well as with sharing their perspectives

FRAMING THE EVENT

- Be sure to mention that there are likely to be different opinions in the room, and perhaps opposing viewpoints. Respect and courtesy will be the best strategies for all participants
 - » Ask all participants if they are comfortable sharing their stories on social media. If so, consider sharing select stories
 - » Be sure to tag [@KTOWN92DOC](#) in all of your posts

Here are some ways to personalize this experience:

- Consider distributing the video stories among the participants via e-mail or text
- Consider providing each person with their own story via text or e-mail, and invite them to share the stories with each other
- Make a message book available to the audience. This is a place for guests to write notes, thoughts, and reactions to the film, event, or their experience with the riots. This can be small journal at a table or a large sheet of paper on the wall for use with markers.

STORYTELLING

A core tenet of engagement is creating space for your audience. There is no better way to create that space than to allow people to tell their own stories and have them feel heard.

Following a screening of **K-TOWN '92**, individuals will likely want to share their own stories. This is an important opportunity to give voice to those who have felt unheard or misunderstood by mainstream media.

Consider some of the following storytelling options:

- When feasible, create a “listening booth,” something as simple as a table and two chairs in a quiet room, along with a means of recording a story either as video or audio (an iPhone will do). One person should be designated as the interviewer, and your guests can volunteer to be the interviewees. The interviewer should plan to ask open-ended questions, and give the guest plenty of time to respond.
- If the event includes children, set-up a coloring station. Ask the children to draw what they know about their culture or race based on TV, movies, and music.
- Consider creating a Facebook group for those attending the event to share in more detail and continue the conversation online. Be sure to tag [@KTOWN92DOC](#) in all of your posts!

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & REFERENCES

LOS ANGELES AREA ORGANIZATIONS

Californians for Justice [CALJUSTICE.ORG/](https://caljustice.org/)

Community Coalition (CoCo) [COCOSOUTHLA.ORG/](https://cocosouthla.org/)

Korean American Coalition (KACLA) [KACLA.ORG/](https://kaccla.org/)

Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA) [KIWA.ORG/](https://kiwa.org/)

Koreatown Youth and Community Center (KYCC) [KYCCLA.ORG/](https://kycccla.org/)

Liberty Hill Foundation [LIBERTYHILL.ORG/](https://libertyhill.org/)

PICO California [PICOCALIFORNIA.ORG/](https://picocalifornia.org/)

Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) [SCOPELA.ORG](https://scopeela.org/)

Watts Labor Action Committee (WLAC) [WLCAC.ORG](https://wlcac.org/)

MEDIA & CULTURAL LITERACY ORGANIZATIONS

Facing History and Ourselves [FACINGHISTORY.ORG/](https://facinghistory.org/)

Maynard Institute [MIJE.ORG/ABOUT/](https://mije.org/about/)

Media Literacy Project [MEDIALITERACYPROJECT.ORG/ABOUT-MLP/](https://medialiteracyproject.org/about-mlp/)

National Association for Media Literacy [NAMLE.NET/](https://namle.net/)

The Critical Media Project [CRITICALMEDIAPROJECT.ORG/](https://criticalmediaproject.org/)

ACADEMIC WORKS

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