



CULTURAL WEEK OF ACTION

CWA EVENT ORGANIZER PLANNING TOOLKIT





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Igniting Change Through Culture: A Guide to Planning Your Cultural Week of Action

The **Cultural Week of Action (CWA)** is a powerful opportunity to harness the transformative energy of arts and culture to address pressing community challenges and build a more just, inclusive, and democratic society. This guide walks you through a step-by-step process to create a CWA event that is rooted in community, driven by collaboration, and designed for lasting impact.

1. Listen Deeply to Your Community: The Foundation of Impact

Every successful CWA event begins with a deep understanding of the community it serves. This means going beyond identifying problems—it's about uncovering the lived experiences, strengths, and aspirations that shape your community.

Ask the Right Questions

Cultural and Democratic Challenges

- What are the most pressing cultural or civic issues in your community?
- Are there threats to freedom of expression, historical erasure, or declining civic engagement?
- Are there opportunities to mobilize your community ahead of the local primary or midterm elections?

Stories That Need to Be Told

- What narratives are missing from public discourse?
- What untold histories or ongoing struggles deserve a platform?
- What examples of community power deserve to be amplified?

Sources of Joy and Connection

- What cultural practices or traditions bring people together?
- What gives your community a sense of belonging and hope?

Embrace Diverse Voices

True understanding comes from a mosaic of perspectives. Actively engage:

- **Youth** – for fresh ideas and future-forward thinking
- **Elders** – for wisdom and historical memory
- **Artists** – for creative expression, ways to tap our imagination, and emotional resonance
- **Educators** – for insight into learning needs
- **Faith Leaders** – for moral guidance and community trust
- **Organizers & Activists** – for frontline perspectives and strategic insight

Build Bridges, Foster Solidarity, Inspire Action

Move beyond surface-level engagement:

- **Bridge Divides** – Finding Common Ground Across Differences.
- **Build Solidarity** – Use shared cultural experiences to highlight collective struggles and aspirations.
- **Inspire Action** – Identify real opportunities to grow community power.

Community-Led Cultural Responses (Examples)

Challenge

Book bans and censorship

Collective grief or trauma

Cultural Response

Host a public reading of banned books or a storytelling circle to affirm intellectual freedom.

Organize a community dance, drumming circle, or sing-along to foster healing and resilience.

2. Identify and Engage Collaborative Partners: Amplify Your Reach

No single person or group can fully represent a community's cultural richness. Strategic partnerships are essential for co-creating an event that is inclusive and impactful.

Think Beyond the Usual Suspects

Consider collaborating with:

- **Artists & Collectives** – for creativity and audience engagement
- **Local Businesses** – for venues, sponsorship, or promotion
- **Cultural Institutions** – for infrastructure and programming support
- **Grassroots Groups** – for authentic community connections
- **Civic Organizations** – for linking culture to civic action

Prioritize Inclusivity and Accessibility

Choose partners who can:

- **Reach Underrepresented Groups** – such as immigrant, LGBTQ+, disabled, or Indigenous communities
- **Ensure Accessibility** – through multilingual materials, ADA-compliant venues, and culturally relevant programming

3. Define Your Goals Together: Chart a Shared Course

Before diving into logistics, gather your team and partners to define your shared purpose. This ensures collective ownership and a unified vision.

Use the Community Needs–Goals Table

Community Frame	CWA Event Idea	Potential Partners	Goals
Youth feel disconnected from civic life	Host a youth-led open mic on democracy and identity	Local schools, youth orgs, poets	Amplify youth voices and civic engagement
Rising disinformation in schools	Host a teach-in with educators and artists	Teachers' union, local library, DEI advocates	Counter disinformation and build narrative power

Tip: Use SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable Relevant, Time bound to refine your objectives.

4. Plan Your Event Meticulously: From Vision to Reality

With your goals and partners in place, it's time to bring your vision to life.

Sample Planning Timeline (2-Month Lead Time)

Timeframe	Key Actions
Week 1–2	Define event goals, identify community needs, and begin outreach to potential partners.
Week 3–4	Confirm collaborators, secure venue(s), and begin drafting program content.
Week 5	Launch promotional campaign (social media, flyers, press outreach). Begin registration or ticketing if applicable.
Week 6	Finalize event schedule, confirm performers/speakers, and ensure accessibility plans are in place.
Week 7	Conduct rehearsals, tech checks, and finalize logistics (volunteers, signage, materials).
Week 8 (Event Week)	Execute the event with joy and intention. Document the experience through photos, video, and participant feedback.
Post-Event (Week 9)	Host a debrief session, share outcomes publicly, and thank all contributors and attendees.

5. Event Planning Checklist

- ☐ Is the event accessible (physically, linguistically, culturally?)
- ☐ Are all community voices represented?
- ☐ Is there a clear plan for promotion and outreach?
- ☐ Are there opportunities for feedback and reflection?
- ☐ Have you built in moments of joy, celebration, and connection?

5. COMMUNITY OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

Spread the word and build excitement:

- 🎨 Create flyers, social media graphics, and email invites
- 📢 Post your event on the CWA map
- 📱 Use hashtags like **#CWA2026** and **#Democracys:** and the week of, so Race Forward can share your event widely
- 📷 Secure a photographer or videographer
- 💬 Share stories and photos after the event to inspire others

6. VIRTUAL EVENT TIPS

- Choose a platform that supports interaction
- Consider time zones and accessibility
- Use closed captioning and multilingual interpretation
- Do a tech run-through with all speakers
- Encourage live tweeting and chat engagement

7. KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

CWA is just the beginning. Consider:

- Hosting follow-up gatherings
- Creating a local cultural coalition
- Connecting your event to civic action (e.g., voter registration, town halls, creating an election day plan.)

A Cultural Week of Action is more than an event—it's a movement. By centering community voices, building inclusive partnerships, and planning with intention, you can create a cultural experience that inspires, heals, and transforms.

Facilitating a Post-Webinar Discussion: Best Practices

Whether you're gathering in a living room, classroom, workplace, or community space, your role as a facilitator is to create a space for **reflection, connection, and courageous conversation**.

Here's how to do it well:

Before the Discussion

1. Set the Tone

- Welcome everyone warmly.
- Share the purpose: *"We're here to reflect on the webinar and explore how culture can strengthen democracy and racial justice."*
- Emphasize values: respect, openness, curiosity, and confidentiality.

2. Prepare the Space

- Choose a quiet, comfortable setting.
- Arrange seating in a circle or semi-circle to encourage dialogue.
- Have materials ready: pens, paper, snacks, and a discussion guide.

During the Discussion

3. Start with a Check-In

- Invite each person to share their name and one word or feeling they're bringing into the space.
- Use a light prompt like: *"What resonated most from the webinar?"*

4. Use Open-Ended Questions

Guide the conversation with prompts like:

- *What stories or ideas stood out to you?*
- *How did the webinar challenge or affirm your understanding of democracy?*
- *What role does culture play in shaping our communities?*
- *What does solidarity look like in your life or work?*

5. Encourage All Voices

- Invite quieter participants to share, but don't pressure.
- Use phrases like: *"Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet."*
- Acknowledge contributions with gratitude.

6. Navigate Tension with Care

- If disagreement arises, affirm that it's okay.
- Use grounding phrases: *"Let's pause and reflect,"* or *"Can we explore that idea together?"*
- Return to shared values: dignity, listening, and truth.

After the Discussion

7. Reflect and Close

- Ask: *"What's one insight or action you're taking with you?"*
- Thank everyone for showing up and sharing.
- Invite participants to stay connected or plan a follow-up gathering.

8. Share Your Gathering

- Post your event on the **Cultural Week of Action map** to show solidarity.
- Share photos, quotes, or reflections (with consent) on social media using the event hashtag.

Facilitator Tips

- Be a guide, not a lecturer.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Stay flexible—follow the energy of the group.
- Celebrate joy, creativity, and connection.



Optional Event Organizer Talking Points:

- Thank you for joining us today.
- We're pleased to have our event, [Name], as part of Race Forward's Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy.
- This is the third consecutive year Race Forward is presenting this week-long series of events. This year we're encouraging events from now until November 3rd to build momentum around our country's midterm elections. Through art, culture, storytelling, and movement, communities, cities and towns across the country are focusing on bringing a just, multiracial democracy into view.
- There couldn't be a more critical time than now to focus on the intersection of culture and democracy as we are seeing efforts to both erase our culture and to undermine democracy.
- That's why the Cultural Week of Action is so important. It is a spark happening in living rooms, libraries, community centers, and city spaces across this country to remind us that together we can defend and fortify democracy and that's what we are doing here today.
- To learn more about Race Forward, the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy, and to find other events in your area or online, visit culturalweekofaction.org.
- [Talk about your event, what people can expect and what you expect of them, including a clear call to action]



Press Release Template

For Immediate Release

[INSERT DATE]

Contact: [INSERT YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CONTACT NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS AND/OR PHONE NUMBER]

[ORGANIZATION OR EVENT NAME] Joins Race Forward's Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy

NEW YORK [JF1] – [name of your organization] today announced it will participate in [Race Forward's](#) second annual **Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy**, a season of action culminating in a week-long series of events taking place in communities, cities, and virtually across the country. Through art, culture, music, movement and learning, artist organizers, and community members will contribute to the strengthening of multiracial democracy.

"There has never been a more critical moment for communities to come together to ground ourselves in who we are, celebrate our culture, and work in solidarity to fortify our democracy," **said Glenn Harris, president, Race Forward.** "The Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy is designed to provide concrete opportunities to help build a nation that works for all,"

[Insert quote from the organizer of your event]

[Include details about your event]

To learn more about Race Forward, the Cultural Week of Action, or to find other events in your area or online, visit culturalweekofaction.org.



Outreach Templates

Email 1 - Save The Date

SUBJECT LINE: Save The Date: [INSERT COMMUNITY/ORGANIZATION/GROUP] Celebrates Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy

[INSERT HEADER IMAGE]

Save the Date for the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy

[INSERT COMMUNITY/ORGANIZATION/GROUP] is excited to invite you to the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy, which ["we'll celebrate from Date-Date." OR, IF SPECIFIC DATES NOT YET CONFIRMED: "will be celebrated nationally from August 1-November 3, 2026, with an official week of action taking place October 27-November 3rd.]

When authoritarian forces try to erase our stories and divide our communities, cultural expression becomes an act of resistance and resilience. The Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy is our collective response—communities nationwide coming alive through music, storytelling, movement, and art to shift harmful narratives, reclaim what democracy can truly mean, and build the country where we can all thrive.

This annual initiative, hosted by Race Forward, brings community members of all backgrounds together to co-create experiences that move us toward justice. We'll explore how culture builds power, connect our local struggles to national movements, and take concrete action to advance racial equity right here in our neighborhoods.

Stay tuned for more updates on where and how you can join us in celebrating the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy. You can expect more email updates from us over the next few weeks! You can also follow us on/at [insert website or social channel(s)] to stay in the loop.

More soon,

[Signature/Standard Sign Off]



Email 2 - Event Invitation

SUBJECT LINE: You're Invited: Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy 2026

We are looking forward to celebrating the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy at [Insert Community/Organization/Group]—part of a nationwide movement for multiracial democracy hosted by Race Forward. Click here to see what's happening across the country.

We refuse to be divided by manufactured conflicts designed to distract us from building real solutions. Instead, we're choosing cultural power as an act of collective imagination. The Cultural Week of Action is our canvas for creative expression and community power—a chance to co-create the just, inclusive multiracial democracy we know is possible.

Through art, culture, music, storytelling, and organizing, we'll demonstrate that we are strongest when we stand together. This is our opportunity to shift the narrative, build bridges across our differences, and take action for racial justice right here in [Insert Community].

Join us [at specific event location/virtually] and [more specific details about your event – Date/time/location? What actions will people take? What can participants expect to do or learn?]

Please RSVP by [DATE] using this link. Have a question about our event for the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy? Reach out to [us/specific organization contact] at [email address].

See you soon, [Signature/Standard Sign Off]



Email 3 - Why It Matters

SUBJECT LINE: The Importance of the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy 2026

Why the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy Matters:

We share core values: dignity, safety, and communities where everyone can thrive. We want neighborhoods where we truly belong, where we're free to be ourselves, and where all of us—across race, background, and zip code—have a fair shot at our dreams.

But right now, authoritarians are manufacturing culture wars to keep us fighting each other instead of fighting for the change we all need. They profit from division because they know that when we unite across race, gender, and class, our movements for justice cannot be stopped.

This is what the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy is about: choosing solidarity over division, creativity over fear, and collective action over isolation. It's about using our songs, stories, and art to build the connections that politics alone can't. It's about taking concrete action to advance racial justice and make our vision of inclusive multiracial democracy real.

On [Date(s)], join us during the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy to connect, create, and build power together as we work toward [details about your community's goal(s)]. Join us [at specific event location/virtually] to [details about your event. What's the topic? What are the goals of the event? What, specifically, will attendees do or learn?]

This event is part of the nationwide Cultural Week of Action, hosted by Race Forward, officially taking place from October 27- November 3, with an invitation to host events as early as August. Click here to see events across the country.

We're excited to see you there. Please RSVP by [DATE] using this link, and don't hesitate to reach out to [us/specific organization contact] at [email address] with any questions.

[Signature/Standard Sign Off]



Email 4 - Final Reminder

SUBJECT LINE: Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy 2026 Starts [This/Next] Week!

The Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy is [Number] Days Away!

Time to turn our creativity into collective action. We're excited to see you [at specific event location/virtually] on [Date and Time] for the Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy.

Here's what you need to know to join us in building collective power through culture:

NAME OF EVENT: [Insert Name of Event]

WHEN: [Date(s) and Time(s)]

WHERE: [Specific Event Location(s)]

WHAT TO BRING: [Items folks should bring to participate. If nothing, omit this section]

WHAT TO EXPECT: [Brief explanation of how the event will build community power, shift narratives, and connect to broader movement work in your community]

Any questions? Don't hesitate to reach out to [us/specific organization contact] at [email address].

Ready to co-create moments that move us toward justice? See you soon!

[Signature/Standard Sign Off]