



## SUMMARY OF EVENT

### **The People's Think Tank Hosts Second Standing Room-Only Town Hall at AERA Los Angeles, Connecting Scholars, Funders, and Community Organizers in Pursuit of Educational Justice**

**Los Angeles, CA** - On April 10, 2026, The People's Think Tank convened another standing-room-only session at the American Educational Research Association's (AERA) Annual Meeting in Los Angeles. The event, designated as a Presidential Session by the AERA program committee, was titled "Re-remembering the Past and Envisioning the Future to Mobilize the Present: Community Organizers, Activist Scholars, and Funders Connecting Movements for Educational Justice." It brought together over 200 attendees to engage in a vibrant discussion on the intersection of research, philanthropy, and grassroots movement-building.

The distinguished panel featured four steering committee members from The People's Think Tank (Vajra Watson, LuzMarina Serrano, Patrice Hill, and Letha Muhammad), renowned scholars Bettina Love and David Stovall, and philanthropic officers Dr. Gisele Shorter and Precious Waldron-Lopez. Moderated by think tank cofounder Mark Warren, the conversation centered on participants' diverse perspectives on this question: "From your own tradition and research, what are lessons from past movements that can power current resistance and future-making?"

Opening with a spoken word performance from think tank steering committee members Patrice Hill and Denisha Coco Bland, the panel grounded educational justice in ancestor wisdom, spiritual practice, and storytelling, treating art not as an add-on but as a core organizing tool. Panelists shared autobiographical lineages—Black Muslim, Southern Black, Caribbean, Indigenous/Quechua, queer and trans, working-class, and migrant—to show how self-determination, joy, land, and family have shaped their commitments to dismantling the school-to-prison and school-to-deportation pipelines, building trans and queer youth power, and challenging systemic racism in schools.

Across the conversation, speakers examined what it takes to build intersectional, intergenerational movements that resist both white supremacy and internal fragmentation. They highlighted the need for transformational solidarity rather than short-term coalitions; discipline and strategy beneath vision and values; and honest distinctions between conflict and harm so that comrades are not mistaken for opponents. Panelists described organizing statewide student and parent movements and legal challenges to DEI bans, while funders and scholars reflected on how to share power, reorient resources, and let go of the "trinkets" of white supremacy—titles, status, and institutional comfort—that get in the way of true collaboration.

The session closed with a collective call to deepen freedom, joy, and love as guiding principles for long-haul educational justice organizing.

The People's Think Tank remains committed to facilitating these critical conversations and to supporting the work of scholars and organizers who are leading the charge for educational justice. The organization plans to build upon the momentum generated at AERA to deepen partnerships and drive forward research and action toward justice.

For more information about The People's Think Tank and its ongoing work, please follow us on Instagram at [@peplesthinktank](#).

###

Contact:  
Shaun de Vera, Project Manager  
The People's Think Tank  
[sdevera@schottfoundation.org](mailto:sdevera@schottfoundation.org)

*The People's Think Tank supports, strengthens, and expands the movement for educational justice by creating a space led by community organizers and the parents, young people and communities with whom they work, lifting up stories and strategies, building new knowledge and organizing models to create solidarity, dismantle anti-Black racism and systemic oppression in all its intersectional forms, developing visions for equitable, humane and liberatory education connected to healthy and vibrant communities, and fostering collective love, sovereignty, healing and well-being.*

*In the People's Think Tank, movement organizers and leaders build authentic relationships, share lived experience and organizing lessons, hold deep and sometimes difficult conversations, conduct participatory action-oriented research, and rejuvenate mind, body, and soul for the struggles ahead towards educational justice and community liberation.*

# The People's Think Tank

Selected Photos of the event (More will be made available at @peoplesthanktank on Instagram)

