



## Embracing Our Differences in Sarasota

By: [Natasha Reisner](#)

On: February 23, 2021

The 50 large-scale visual art billboards and thought-provoking quotations arouse emotion as I begin silently acknowledging the pent-up feelings I've harbored. I feel the warm breeze on my skin and notice the glittering calm blue water of Sarasota Bay, creating the perfect backdrop for this provocative open-air exhibition.

### Thought-Provoking Art

---

We contemplate the first emotionally evocative billboard, step back and read the quotation, silent for an interminable time. My mom's eyes begin welling up with tears while my sister stands transfixed, gazing at visual art and its accompanying quotation. She starts smiling optimistically.

# Embracing Our Differences Inspires the Viewer



Embracing Our Differences is a not-for-profit organization located in Sarasota, Florida. The powerfully evocative initiative employs billboard-sized art and accompanying quotations inviting the viewer to explore the intersectionality of race, religion, gender, class, ethnicity, and religion, representing American society and the world. The visual art submissions and quotations received from 48 States and 128 countries worldwide are blindly selected and matched by volunteer committees. The

exhibition highlights some of our everyday human commonalities and the struggles that bind us in an ever-changing society through a respectful lens. A year-round educational initiative offers educators skills, strategies, and resources to provide curricula that enhance character, perspective, critical thinking skills, and appreciation for diversity.

## Relevance, Motivation & Passion

Sarah Wertheimer, Executive Director Extrodanaire at Embracing Our Differences, successfully oversees all programming and fiscal planning along with a highly dedicated team, which ultimately positively impacts more than 300,000 adults and children annually. "The message is relevant, and by moving it to virtual field trips through Zoom or on-demand videos, teachers use the tools to initiate critically relevant



discussions with their students. The focus has always been on education, and the younger we can reach the children, the more likely they are to absorb diversity and inclusion," says Sarah. It is clear that Sarah has found her passion and describes the shift to virtual educational formatting as a silver lining – through technology, they are reaching more eager learners ready to embrace differences in the US and around the world.

# Parenting Aspirations

---

As a mom, I dreamed of raising my children without bias and a strong sense of self-worth despite differences. The reality has been far harsher than I ever imagined. Despite the challenges, we ask ourselves as caretakers, educators, and parents how best to impart the values of inclusivity, an appreciation of differences, and pride through an open-minded respectful lens.

Don't miss the annual admission-free exhibit that runs mid-January through early April at Bayfront Park in Downtown Sarasota.

[WEBSITE](#)

*Photos from Natasha Reisner*