



Belonging – Dealing with Exclusion
Presented by Na'Shantéa Miller, Sophia Abolore, and Jamal Grant
SummerUp 2022
Webinar Description

Webinar Name: Belonging – Dealing with Exclusion

Webinar Date: 6.00 p.m., Wednesday, August 24, 2022

Webinar Status: Open for registrations until just before the start of this webinar on August 24, 2022.

Who Should Register: Any Black youth; parents; educators; other interested individuals.

Register: Use the following link to register:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RBK6T2M-Q9eum5dYrzdMLA

What

“Belonging is the feeling of security and support when there is a sense of acceptance, inclusion, and identity for a member of a certain group. It is when an individual can bring their authentic self to work.” [Cornell University](#)

As a Black student, do you ever enter spaces, places, and situations where you have a sense that you do not belong...that you are not included? Do you sometimes feel that others see you as not qualified to be in a given space, group, or organization? Have you experienced anxiety from your belief that your success “has not been legitimately achieved as a result of your own efforts or skills”? Have you ever had to join a team or group where you are the sole Black representative, and where you feel that you have to be ‘other than yourself in order to fit in... or that you have to sacrifice your voice in order to be a ‘team player’? If your answer is yes to these questions, how do you deal with these feelings of ‘not belonging’ and, by extension, not being able to fully engage? These are the questions and issues that will be explored by our panelists at the *Belonging* webinar and it’s a conversation every Black student should join.

In the *Leadership by Design* (LBD) program, we encourage students to develop a mindset in which they feel they belong wherever they venture. We want Black youth to feel the power of their presence in any setting irrespective of the academic, socio-economic, or racial powerplays that may be presented, and not to be overcome by feelings of insecurity. We want Black youth to value themselves highly. We want them to enter post-secondary programs that have traditionally resisted Black participation...because these programs are invariably the ones that are future-proofed and high paying. We want Black youth to seek careers and employment of their choice rather than shy away because they do not ‘see anyone there that looks like them’.

Why this Matters

We know that a sense of belonging, being included, and being respected are critical to student mental health, student self-esteem, student satisfaction, and student success. This is especially so for the Black student entering settings such as a university with significant admission and social barriers, the high school in a high-income neighbourhood with a small population of Black students, and the high-demand program of study that is considered open to the ‘academic elite’. Should a Black person experience exclusion and feel alien to the educational, social, and workplace settings, the negative impact on academic, social, and professional performance can be severe. While these issues are ideally addressed by systemic change, it is still important for the Black student to understand the dynamics of belonging and to adopt strategies for dealing with it. It is also necessary for Black students to exercise their [resistant capital](#). This webinar starts the conversation for many.

Belonging – Dealing with Exclusion will be discussed through the lens and experiences of three Black students who are enrolled in university settings and programs that often induce questions of belonging: Do I really belong here? Are those folks over there wondering ‘How did you get in here?’ Is the chatter on social media hostile? Let’s hear the strategies these students used to offset the obstacles they encountered and strategies they used to assert their right to belong and be included. You’ll discover the issues are immensely more complex than first imagined, but you’ll end up with a better understanding of the challenges. Hopefully, conversations like these will have you feeling more confident in your ability to assert your sense of personal belonging and exercise your resistant capital...irrespective of the obstacles.

Webinar Registration Details

Who: This webinar is wide open to all students, parents, educators, and to the wider Black community who are keen to explore the issue of ‘belonging’. Elementary and secondary school students and their parents are welcome. So too are university and college students and educators. All will benefit from this webinar. In fact, this webinar should be ‘family viewing’ with members of the family clustered around the computer – followed by intra-family reflection.

Date: This Zoom-based webinar will take place at 6.00 p.m., Wednesday, August 24, 2022. It should end by 7.30 p.m.

Register: The process for attending this SummerUp 2022 webinar is different from other SummerUp 2022 courses. For this webinar, *Belonging – Dealing with Exclusion*, you simply register using the link below and immediately receive a registration confirmation. Then...attend on August 24.

Here is the link for registering for this webinar:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_RBK6T2M-Q9eum5dYrzdMLA

Mode: Virtual (Zoom)

FACULTY

Sophia Abolore

Sophia Abolore is a second-year Computer Science student at the University of Toronto and a software engineering intern at Microsoft. She was one of the ten high school students in Canada chosen as recipients of the University of Toronto National Scholarship, a full-ride scholarship to the University of Toronto. Her work ranges from the equity in the education system to promoting racial and gender parity in STEM. She is extremely involved in activism and channels her involvement through slam poetry, giving speeches, and art. Sophia recently gave a Ted Talk at the Black Voices conference touching on imposter syndrome among black students in post-secondary institutions.



Na'Shantéa Miller

Na'Shantéa Miller recently completed her second year of graduate studies at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is enrolled in the Master of Public Policy program with a concentration in business and government. She is the recipient of 9 awards based on academic merit and/or community involvement, including the Organization of American States graduate scholarship sponsored by the Government of Canada.

Na'Shantéa attended high school in Brampton and pursued her undergraduate degree at the University of Ottawa. There she received an Honours Bachelor of Social Sciences with a double major in Political Science and Economics – French Immersion and Cooperative Education.

She has an outstanding record of community service including many years serving as a mentor to Black youth through the Leadership by Design program.



Jamal Grant

Jamal Grant is a first-generation American and is the son of Trinidadian immigrants. He was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts, and graduated from UMass Lowell with a B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering (2015). Jamal has worked as an Aerospace Systems Engineer at MIT Lincoln Laboratory and is the Founder and Director of The NET Mentoring Group (TheNETMentoring.org), a Boston-based non-profit aimed at closing the STEM achievement gap for young girls and underrepresented minorities. In March of 2019, Jamal served as the Lead Filmmaker for the Ase Research Film Project (Aseresearchfilm.org), a film centered on wealth inequality, race relations, and progress in South Africa 25 years since apartheid. Currently, Jamal is a dual MPA/MBA candidate at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the MIT Sloan School of Management (2022). His career aspirations are to research and craft innovative pathways to economic empowerment for marginalized communities in the 21st century.

