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Black Folk Theatre:

Educating Faculty and Administrators on Black Students' Experiences at PWIs

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Heal.Be.Live., LLC | *Eastern Michigan University* | *California State University, Long Beach*

November 4, 2021

@ 1:00pm AST

2021 ASHE Conference

(www.healbelive.com)

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DISCLAIMER



NO PHOTOS OR VIDEOS DURING THIS PRESENTATION!

- We are covering a very sensitive subject matter that, if circulated without full context, could be somewhat harmful in other spaces.
- This project is still in development and, thus, the materials being created to eliminate harm are not fully established.
- Most importantly, the presentation includes the stories of Black students who were willing to be very vulnerable and the intended goal of this presentation was to exist in a container to honor the sacredness of their sharings.

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Who Is Heal.Be.Live.?

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Who We Are NOT (Disclaimer)

Heal.Be.Live., LLC is not a mental health organization and does not officially endorse mental health resources, including the resources presented today, nor are we responsible for the way in which participants engage with the resources presented. Rather, we present these resources as additional ways to reflect on today's topic.

Although Heal.Be.Live., LLC has a mission to yield healing through art, we are not a clinical-based or resourced company. We do not serve as alternatives to medical professionals and if you feel triggered in any life-threatening way, please seek out professional help or call 911.

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Who We Are

ART + Activism

Our mission is simple.

We use art to start conversations in communities. #ARTivism

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Who We Are *(Summary)*

Heal.Be.Live., LLC tackles emotional, mental and social **barriers that interfere with members of the black community from acknowledging and addressing their individual and collective trauma**. We tackle these barriers by:

- Using creative expression as a **low-risk** introduction to “taboo” topics plaguing the black community.
- Performing and presenting in spaces within communities (theatres, schools, community centers, etc.) in order to **increase attendance and accessibility**.
 - *This also reduces the **stigma around attending clinical settings** for mental health treatment.*
- **Building trust for available resources by directly connecting them to our audience members in their own community spaces.**

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Response + Feedback

Heal.Be.Live. Audiences

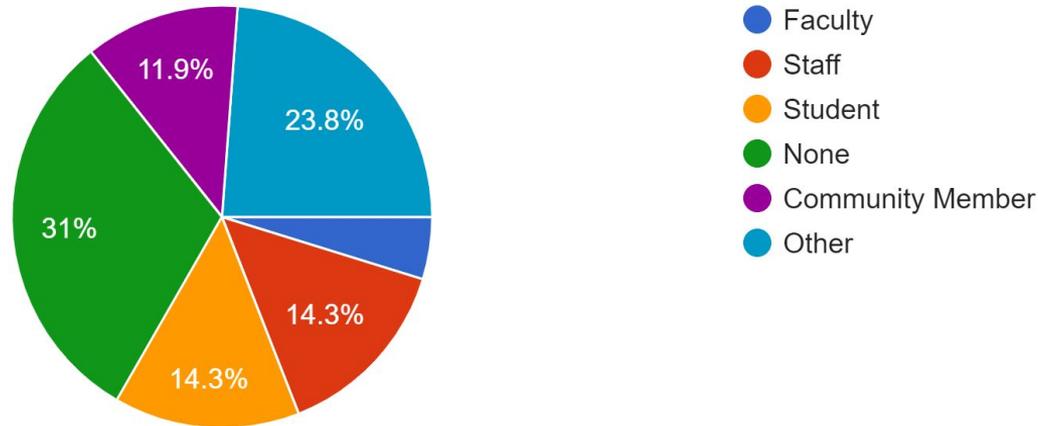
(2017-2021)

Telling Our Stories | *Black Women in America*

Empowers the voices of Black Women in America by creating a space for them to tell their own, full stories.

Affiliation with University of Michigan

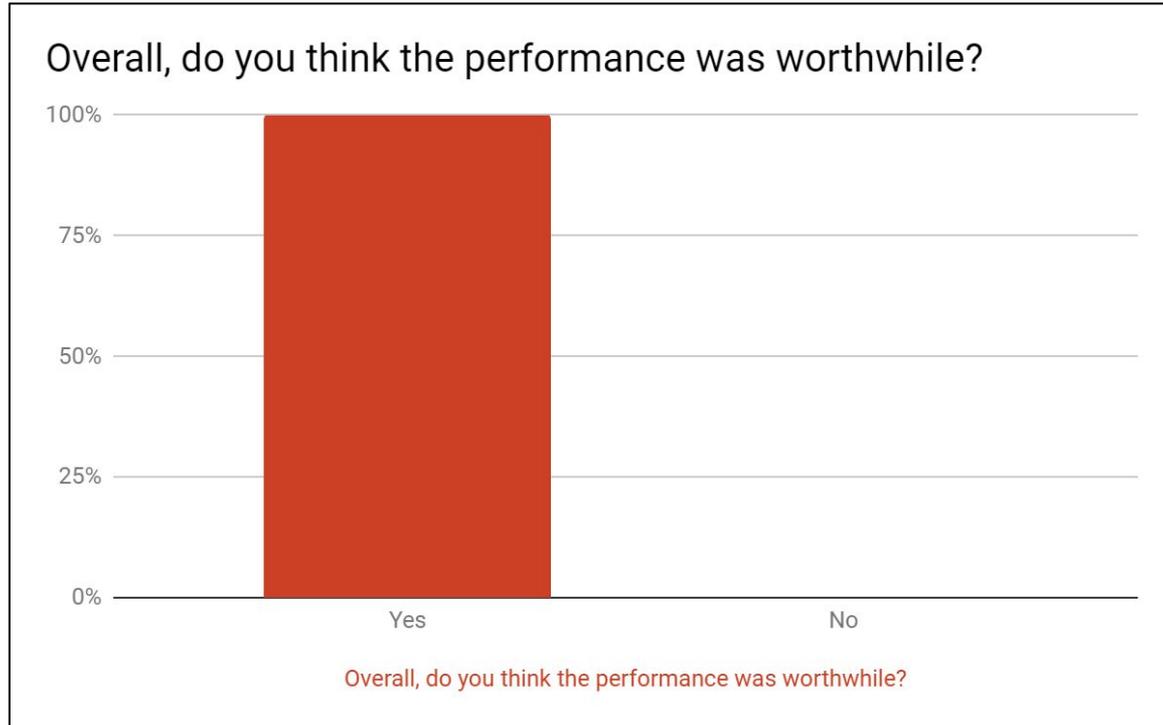
42 responses



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Telling Our Stories | *Black Women in America*

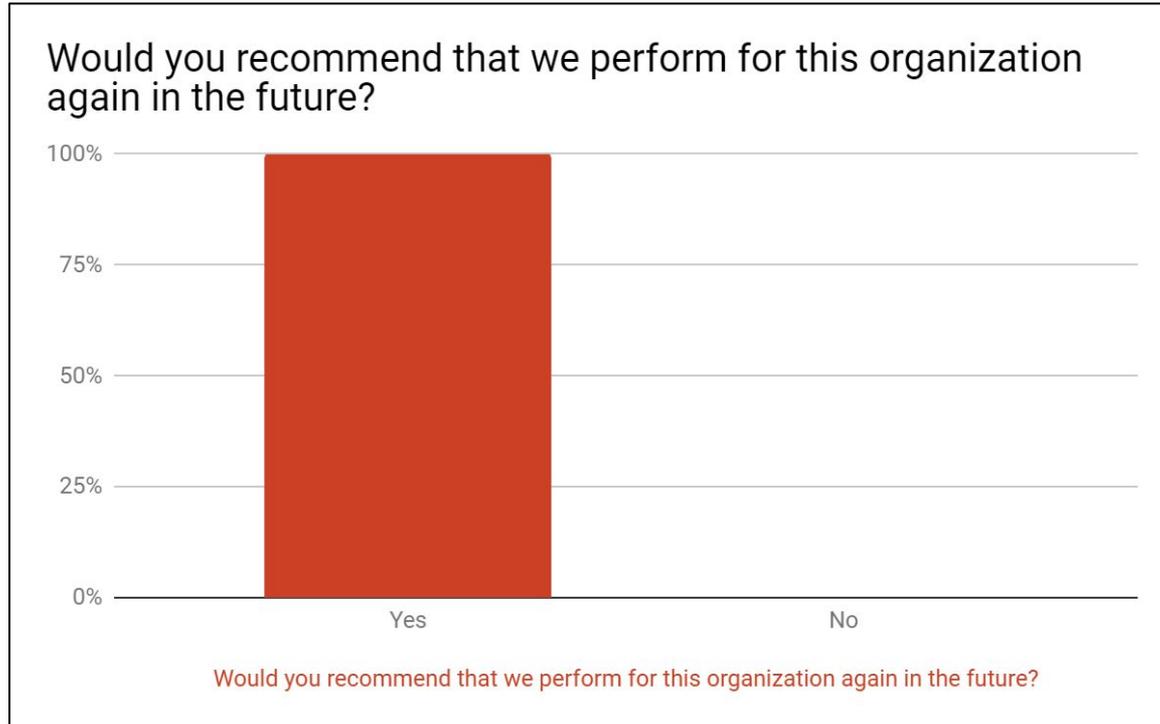
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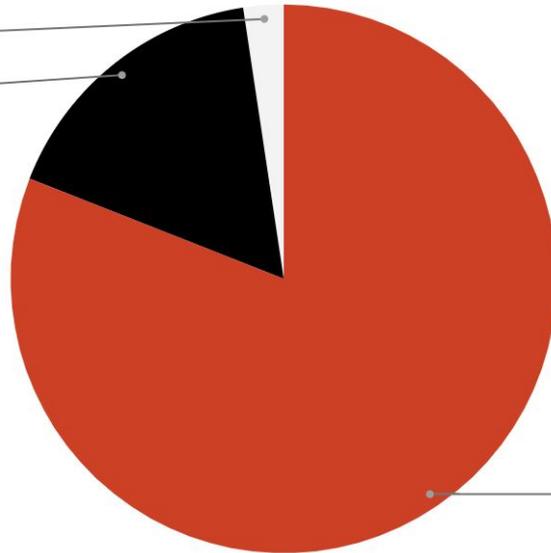
Please tell us how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. [The performance was moving.]

Strongly Disagree

2.4%

Agree

16.7%



Strongly Agree
81.0%

Written Feedback from the Strongly Disagree:

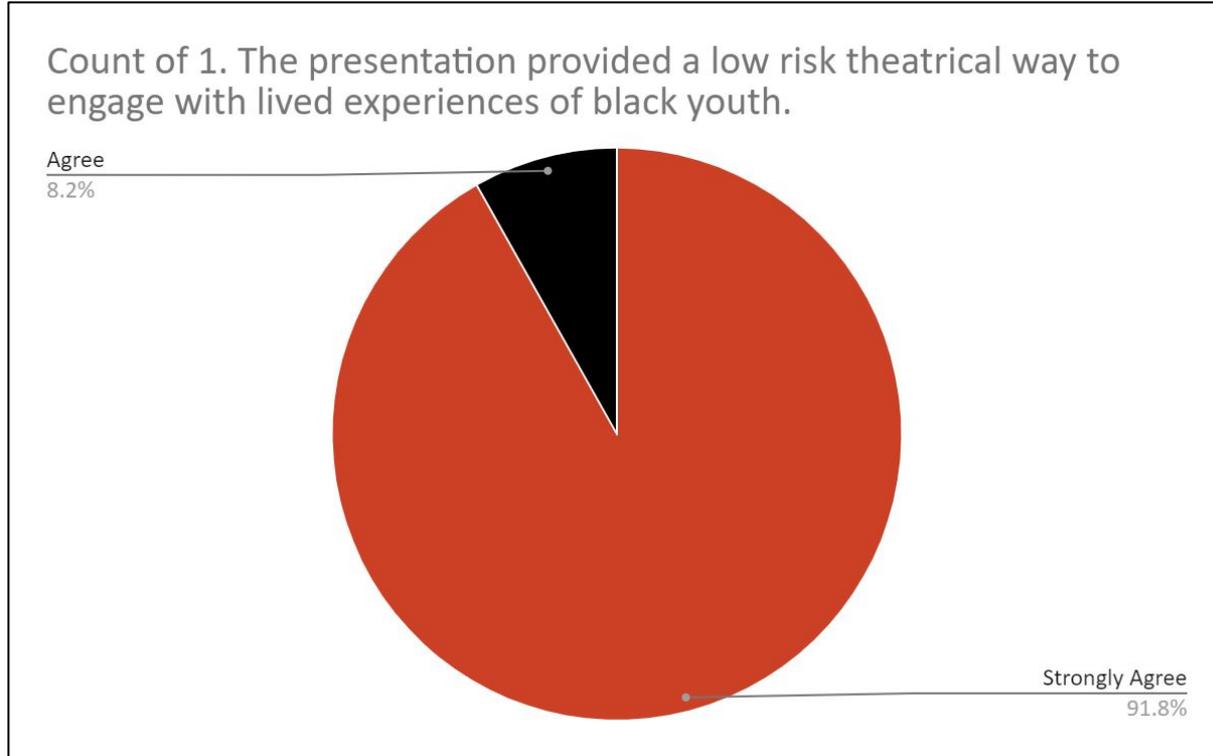
“Enjoyed a lot, very powerful, great intro.”

*Possibility that survey response was inputted accidentally.

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THE W.I.T.C.H. | *Professional Development Tool*

Uses theatre to guide educators and practitioners in identifying symptoms of trauma among Black youth.



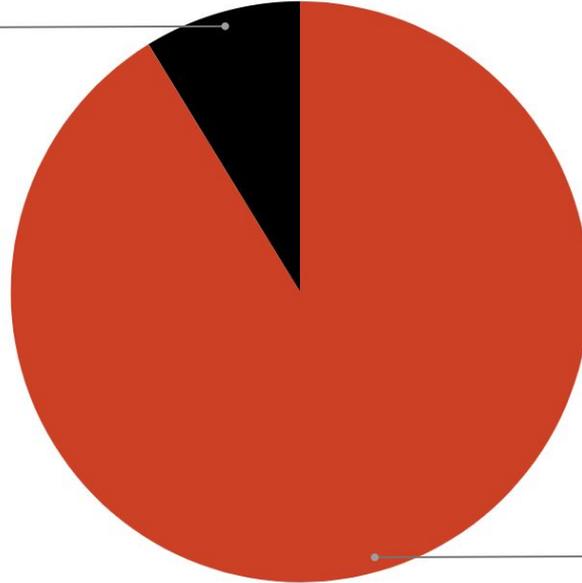
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THE W.I.T.C.H. | *Professional Development Tool*

Uses theatre to guide educators and practitioners in identifying symptoms of trauma among Black youth.

Count of 16. I would recommend this class to a friend

Agree
8.8%



Strongly Agree
91.2%

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THE W.I.T.C.H. | *Professional Development Tool*

Uses theatre to guide educators and practitioners in identifying symptoms of trauma among Black youth.

Total new concept and very informative.

The entire class

Processing of the drama and the drama. Inclusion of clips from additional experts; watching the play

I enjoyed the entire presentation; thought provoking and providing other insight into diagnosing experiences of at risk youth

The break down of what happen in the play

The play. Presenter is amazingly talented and effective in educating audience on techniques and parallels for use in clinical practice.

The discusson on factors that contribute to black youth attitudes and behavior

This was spectacular. The play was AMAZING. Particularly as she used it as an anchor for the training.

The use of Theater to better understand the client and worker perception of their environment
excellent presentation , interactive, though provoking conversations

The presentation and videos.

It was great

Open discussion

Processing what we saw in the vignette, identifying treatment concerns, learning about

The entire presentation.

Not my favorite presentation

Learning how racism play a role in diagnosis

Her whole presentation was super engaging and reflective

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Waking Up Alive | *Black Mental Wellness*

Explores views on mental illness within: the Black community, the Black church, and similarly impacted communities at large.

- **(Q #1) “I learned about resources that are available to me.”**
 - 1% (Strongly Disagree), 14% (Disagree), 0% (Neutral), 21% (Agree), 50% (Strongly Agree)
- **(Q #2) “I plan to explore or use some of the resources presented today.”**
 - 21% (Strongly Disagree), 1% (Disagree), 21% (Neutral), 14% (Agree), 36% (Strongly Agree)

***Note:** $\frac{3}{4}$ of the surveys that reported either **Strongly Disagree or Disagree** for question Q #2 were **either mental health professionals or already had history with mental health resources.**

Overall, **71%** of the surveys confirmed that they **learned about available resources.** And **50%** of those same surveys stated that they were either **open to or strongly planned to seek out the available resources.**

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The Black Student Advocacy Project (The BSAP)

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What is The Black Student Advocacy Project?

General Overview: A series of workshops using **theatre** to tackle **anti-Black racism** at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

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What is The Black Student Advocacy Project?

Staff/Faculty/Administrator-Facing: Learn alternative ways to discuss and address issues of discrimination and inequity that Black students may face at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

Black Student-Facing: Provides a race-based **affinity space** for Black undergraduate students to be seen and heard, as well as empowered with tools to activate self-care at predominantly white institutions (PWIs).

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#1. The Research *(Inciting)* | Ingram & Wallace, 2019

- When looking at “both qualitative and quantitative data...study findings suggest that **experiences of racism and/or oppression are highly prevalent**” at PWIs.
- Research has shown the robust “**association between experiences of racism and biopsychosocial outcomes for minority college students**, including depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and negative impacts on physical health.”

#1. The Research *(Inciting)* | Various Research

Research has already been conducted surveying Black students on what supports they feel would best address their experiences of racism and anti-blackness at large:

- “Universities across the nation should **focus on inclusion programs, instead of just diversity**” (Ingram & Wallace, 2019)
- There is a need for “colleges and universities to develop stress intervention programs that **address stress specifically based on race** and school racial composition” (Negga et. al, 2007).
- Racial equity and inclusion programming is important, but “when colleges make changes and start diversity and inclusion efforts, racism and microaggressions can still take a toll.” PWIs can assist in alleviating the stressors of microaggressions by **making sure students feel seen and heard** (Zamudio-Suarez, 2021).

#2. Theatre *(Humanizing Research)* | Various Research

- Interactive Theatre (IT) has been utilized with faculty and graduate students for over a decade to explore ways **faculty can effectively deal with difficult conversations** (Burgoyne et al., 2006).
- As participants engage with the sketch, the characters, and each other, “they are drawn into **making sense of the issues portrayed, relating them to personal experience, and strategizing about how to transform a difficult situation**” (Kaplan et al., 2006, pg.34).
- This approach engages the intellect, enacts a sense of empathy, provokes, entertains, and, most importantly, **allows for growth in improving the culture of a particular environment** (Kaplan & Steiger, 2011).

#3. Curriculum

(Sample Preview)

SESSION #1 | THE CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

SAMPLE CURRICULUM!

ABOUT SESSION #1

The Classroom Experience



"I started to question myself.
Did I deserve to be here?"

- Jamesha

● ● ●

CORE MODULES

MODULE #1
Welcome to College

MODULE #2
Meet and Greet

MODULE #3
Peer Editing

MODULE #4
Jamesha's Story

CHARACTERS
Jamesha
Amy
Evan
Professor Peters

Overview

This session follows the journey of a Black college freshman, who is the only person of color in their First Year Writing Seminar. They are, in turn, the only person of color in their Peer Editing group. Audiences will get to watch how this student's experiences unfolds.

AUDIENCE / OBJECTIVES:

- **Staff:** This session gives space for staff to learn more about the experiences of Black students' in predominantly white classrooms and to reflect on opportunities for advocacy.
- **Students:** This is an affinity space session that gives space for Black students to reflect and share about their experiences in predominantly white academic settings.

 = Virtual Session Available

 = In-Person Session Available

FOCUS AREAS:

- Microaggressions, Racism, Student Engagement, Self-Reflection, Triggers, Academia

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#4. Facilitation* (*Student-Facing*) | Various Research

Race-Based Affinity Space:

- Racial affinity groups are groups defined by Great Schools Partnerships (2020) as “a group of people sharing a common race who gather with the intention of finding connection, support, and inspiration.”
- Affinity groups help to shift conversations around identity from surface-level in nature to more in-depth in nature “uncovering internal and external attributions, elements of intersectionality and a desire to improve [campus] communication [which] remains **the answer to improving [institutional] diversity**” (Lambertz-Berndt, 2016).

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Focus of Presentation: #1 and #2

Responsive Research + Theatrical Presentation Preview



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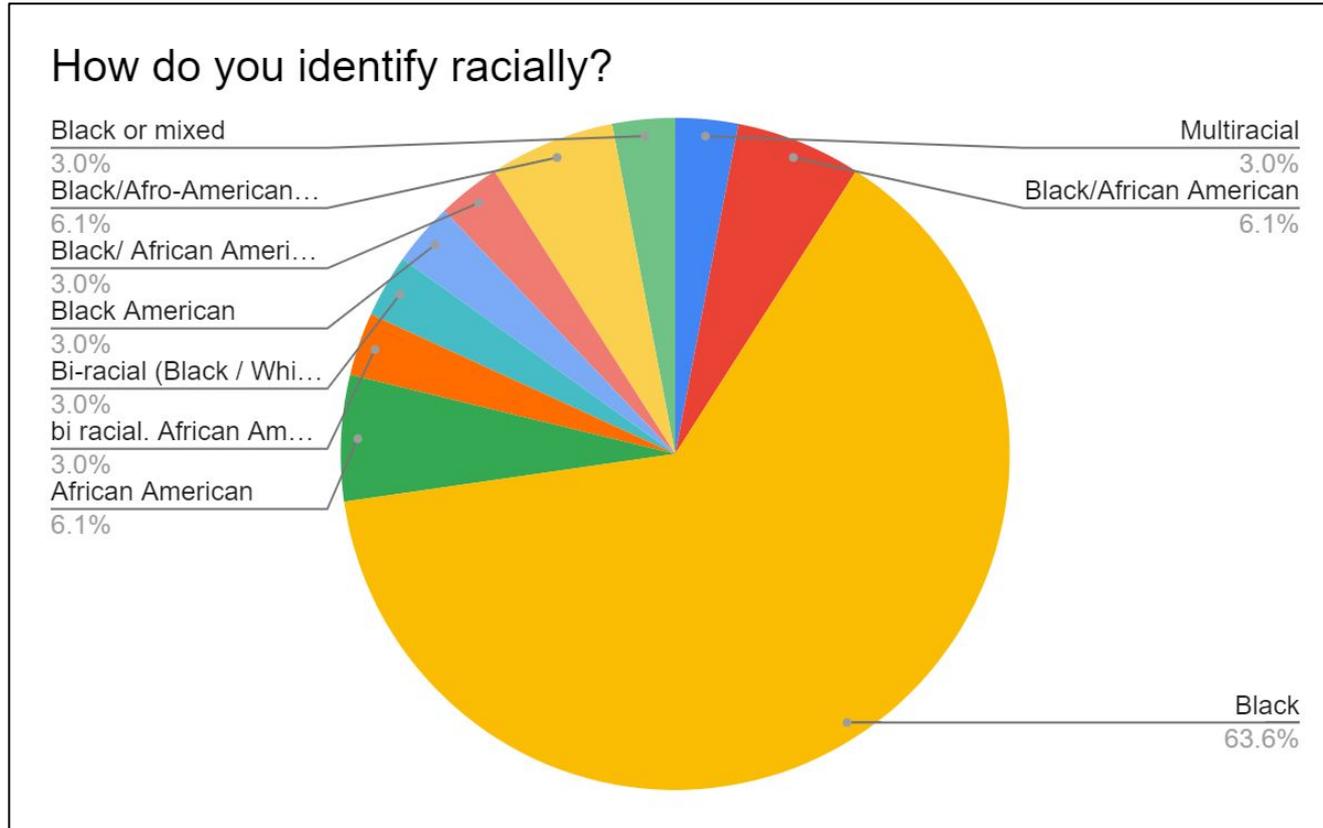
What Are Black Students Saying?

(Heal.Be.Live./Responsive Research)

Modes of Inquiry/Methodology

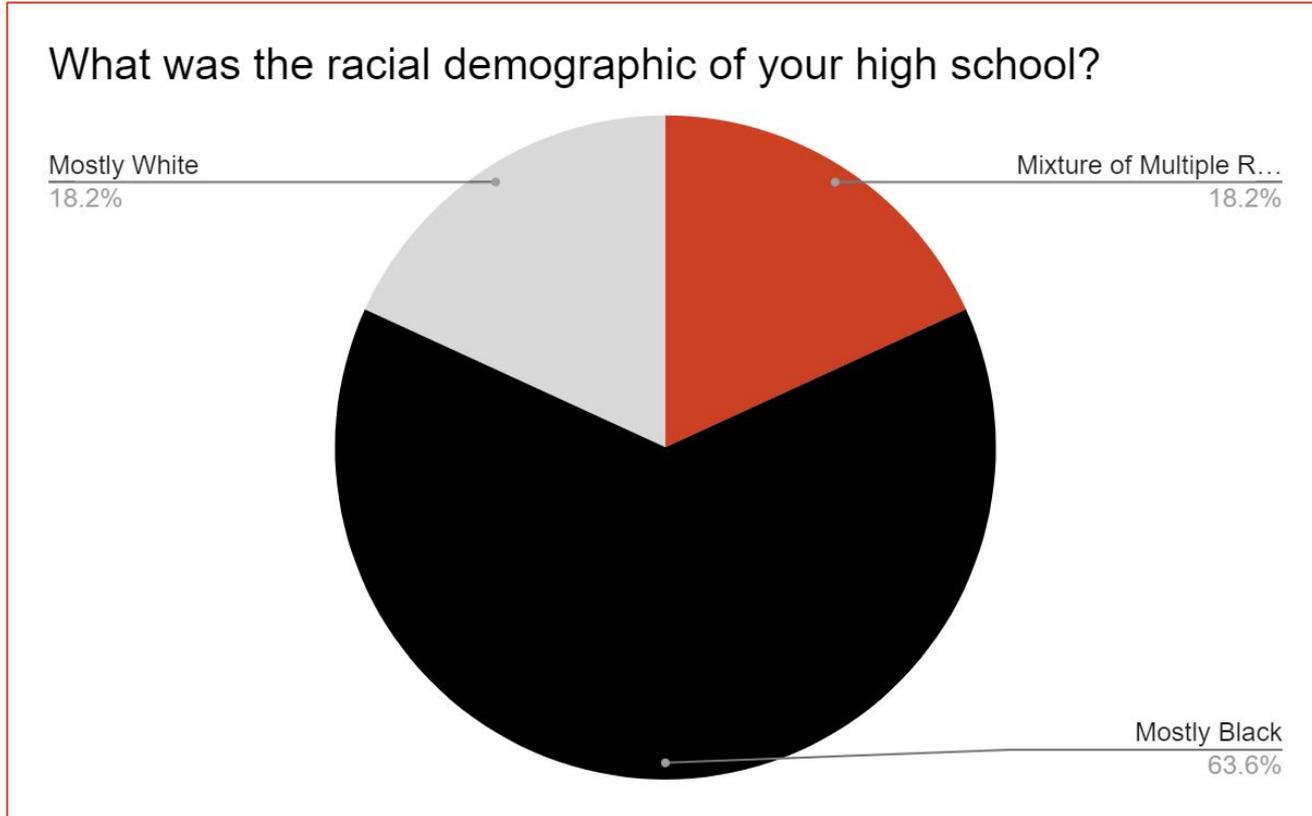
- 50+ surveys were sent out to former Black graduates of PWIs from undergraduate and/or graduate studies.
- The survey contained questions around racial and gender demographics, the racial demographics of the former Black graduates' high school, and questions around their racial experiences on PWI campuses.
- Respondents also provided written descriptions of “profound” moments on campus that were centered around their race.
- **There were a total of 28 surveys submitted. Each respondent consented to the use of their responses.**

Results/Findings *(Race + Gender Demographics)*



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High School Demographics *(Racial Makeup)*



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What did you feel unprepared for, as a Black student?

#1. Being the only person of color in a class (64.3%)

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What Do Black Experiences Look Like?

(Theatrical Presentation PREVIEW)

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Theatrical Presentation Objectives

- Expose staff/faculty to situations that former Black college students felt unprepared to handle.
- Examine ways that microaggressions show up for Black students in predominantly white classrooms.
- Examine ways faculty can contribute to microaggressive classrooms.
- Engage staff/faculty in brainstorming possible ways to counter microaggressive classrooms.
- Encourage staff/faculty to be thoughtful/ culturally sensitive when implementing alternative modes of instruction, or the curriculum at large.
- ***Consider ways that performance can incorporate research and showcase Black students' experiences in a "fuller context."***
- ***Consider possibilities for creative innovation in education practice and training.***

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Theatrical Presentation Overview

Three (3) theatrical modules (**“Classroom Experience”**) presenting the experiences of a Black student in one of her courses at a predominantly white institution (PWI).

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Preview Videos



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Video Discussions

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Next Steps...

(Website + Info Guides + Book Us!)

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Q+A