

Freedom Summer Series  
Black Student Panel  
Young, Gifted and Black

**Facilitators:**

- Dr. Fabiola Bagula
- Anthony Ceja
- Felicia Singleton-Daniel

**Student Moderators:**

- Karly VanHolten, Junior at UCLA
- Sewit Tesfamicael, Senior at UCLA

**Student Panelist:**

- Ahmani, 12th grader
- Brianna, 12th grader
- Cameron, 12th grader
- Jordan, 11th grader
- Juwaun, 12th grader
- Miles, 12th grader
- Ricky, 10th grader
- Temple, 12th grader

**Fabiola:** Good morning and welcome! On behalf of the San Diego County Office of Education, welcome to Young, Gifted and Black, a Black student experience panel.

I want to thank everyone for joining us this morning, and I have two requests for us as we bear witness. The first is a disposition offered by the National Equity Project which states, "my experience is not up for debate. May we listen with open minds, open hearts, and open wills in order to understand, empathize, and lean into constructing a new way of being in public education." The second comes from Native American Scholar Silko. She states, "Our stories are not for your entertainment. Our cultures come from a strong oral history culture and our stories are not only testimonies but also lessons for us."

Thank you, again, for your time. I will now turn this over to our partner, Felicia Singleton-Daniel.

**Felicia:** Good morning, everyone. My name is Felicia Singleton, and I am honored to be with you today. We recognize that it's summer, and in spite of COVID-19 closures, there are places and spaces you could have given your time and attention to. However, you made the decision to join us for the launch of the Freedom Summer Series by way of the student panel discussion entitled Young, Gifted and Black. We

are grateful to have the opportunity to begin the series with the stories and experiences of courageous and amazing young, gifted, black students.

We are utilizing the restorative approach today with the intention of creating a community of care, connection, trust and safety. Our student panelist is encouraged to speak their truth. From restorative practices, we've learned the value of engaging all voices and repairing harm and to begin the healing process. While the stories shared today are not the unique experiences of the youth here, unfortunately, they are not isolated to just them, their schools, or their communities. The gaps, as we know them (achievement, access, opportunity or discipline) are present in all of our schools. You'll be hearing from students who attend both public schools and charter schools throughout our county.

Today's conversation is not about illuminating harm that has happened in one certain school or one specific district. Racism is alive and well throughout k-12 education and institutions of higher learning, making today's youth voice-centered panel essential if we want to make meaningful and transformational change. James Baldwin said, said it beautifully, "not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced."

Because we're using restorative format, we always start with an opening. As an opening, I'm going to introduce the panelist and moderators, and I'm going to ask them to name the person who has empowered them and supported them in their educational journeys. And that person is the person they are dedicating today's conversation to today.

So, we're going to get started with Ahmani. Ahmani is a 12th grader and Ahmani, why don't you go ahead and tell us, or just say your name and who you're dedicating the conversation to.

**Ahmani:** Hi, my name is Ahmani, and I'm dedicating this conversation to my mom because she's always been there to support me and has always tried to uplift me in any other way possible.

**Felicia:** Thank you. Brianna. Can you tell us your your grade and who you're dedicating the conversation to today?

**Brianna:** I'm Brianna. I'm in 12th grade, and I dedicate this conversation to my mother. She has always taught me to be myself even when times are rough.

**Felicia:** Thank you and Cameron.

**Cameron:** Hi, my name is Cameron Dustin, and I'm a 12th grader. I will be dedicating this conversation to my mom, who has always taught me to be a better person every day and really learn from the past mistakes to make myself a better person.

**Felicia:** Thank you, Cameron and Jordan.

**Jordan:** Hello, my name is Jordan Cooper. I'm a junior, and I'm going to be dedicating this conversation to my dad, who has always been there to help me through the toughest situations.

**Felicia:** Thank you, Jordan. Juwaun: we invite you to go next. Tell us your grade and who you're dedicating the conversation to today.

**Juwaun:** Hello, everybody. I'm Juwaun. I'm in 12th grade. I'm dedicating this conversation to my mentor, Reggie Washington, because he showed me a lot of things since I've been home.

**Felicia:** Thank you, Juwaun. And, Miles, can you go next please?

**Miles:** My name is Miles, and I would like to dedicate this conversation to my dad because always pushes me to go forward every time and to be the best I can, always.

**Felicia:** Thank you and Ricky.

**Ricky:** My name is Ricky I'm in 10th Grade, and I would like to dedicate this conversation my uncle Ronnie. He is one of the nicest people I know, and he's a real role model for me.

**Felicia:** Thank you, Ricky. And Temple.

**Temple:** I'm Temple. I'm a senior, and I want to dedicate this conversation to my grandmother who taught me how to be an activist and how to advocate and make spaces for myself.

**Felicia:** Thank you, and now we'll move on to our panelists. We have Karly Van Holten. Karly, tell us what school you attend and your year.

**Karly:** Hello everyone. My name is Karly Van Holten. I am a junior at UCLA. Education and transformation major and minor in African American Studies and Chicano studies. I am dedicating this to my community. They have always been very supportive of me in all my accomplishments and without everyone that supported me, I would not be who I am.

**Felicia;** Thank you, Karly, and next, we have Sewit.

**Sewit:** Hi everyone. My name is Sewit, and I'm a senior at UCLA with a major in business economics and I dedicate this conversation to Nipsey Huggle, an activist, entrepreneur, and rapper who has taught me that the marathon continues.

**Felicia:** Awesome. So, everyone, thank you again for being here. Thank you, student panelists and our moderators. And now, I'm going to turn the conversation over to Sewit.

**Sewit:** Thank you. So, thank you all for being here today, and big thank you to all our student panelists. We have three questions that will frame today's discussion. The first question is...What is your experience being harmed by racism in schools? Temple, would you like to start us off? I would like to invite you to please share with the audience a time that you've been harmed by racism in the schools.

**Temple:** A time I've experienced racism in school was during my freshman year in my Spanish class. I was new to the school. I started three months late into my freshman year because I originally went to a charter,

and I wanted to go to public school for a more diverse experience. So, I was in Spanish class and my teacher was talking about what his family traditions were, and he said that in his household, his family called black people "cucarachas" or cockroaches. And then, he asked my classmates, and that included two of my friends, to raise their hands if they themselves or their families and ever been racist or said racist things to black people. I'm the only black person in class. Everybody, including my teacher, raised their hands. I had to sit there and watch that my teacher and my classmates prove that they don't except me...and that my classmates don't accept me...and that I wasn't welcome.

**Sewit:** Thank you so much for sharing that, Temple. Jordan, would you also be able to share your experience with us today?

**Jordan:** Yeah, I would. So, sophomore year. Sophomore, year? Yeah. Sophomore year, I was in my advisory class, and we were doing a project. We had to use scissors. There were limited pairs, so I was using one for a minute, and a student who — keep in mind I didn't know or have any problems with beforehand— he used physical aggression...knocking me out of my seat and then, afterwards, he called me the n-word while I was in that position. Before anything started, my teacher came and told us go to the principal. While we're in the office talking about everything, you know, I was just able to tell him what happened and the full story and how I did nothing wrong. Afterwards, nothing happened to the student, except for being transferred to another class. I feel like my school didn't really understand the impact of what happened. They kind of just slid it under the rug so that it wouldn't come up anymore.

**Sewit:** Thank you so much, Jordan, for sharing that experience with us today. Miles, would you also like to share your experience with the audience?

**Miles:** Some experiences that I've had with racism occurred from about 7th grade to even now. I went to a primarily Mexican school, and people would constantly tell me that I don't seem Black because I don't speak like you know, like a typical black person. Some people would even call me "miate". They think that I wouldn't understand what it means.

**Sewit.** Thank you for sharing your experience with us today, Miles. Brianna, would you like to talk about your experience and how it had an impact on yourself image in high school?

**Brianna:** Yes, thank you. My experience wasn't really in high school. It was when I was a lot younger. So, it definitely has had an impact now. Growing up, I remember being the only brown girl in my class or even in my school. I tried everything to fit in. I had wished then that I had blue eyes, lighter skin, or fair hair. I begged my mom every single day to straighten my hair. I hated my curls. I hated everything about them. So, I would just do anything to make my appearance so I wouldn't feel the odd one out.

**Sewit:** Thank you all for sharing your personal stories. All these youth are sharing what has happened to them in K through 12th school. My story is connecting more to my college experience. As a college student, I'm always blatantly ignored by my professors and educators. There's one instance when I asked my accounting professor a question, and he scanned the entire room and acknowledged everyone else and skipped me. He didn't even look at me...not once. And this is one example of, just one example of a professor that has done that to me. It's just something that I face all the time. Regardless if I spoke up or

not, they don't look my way, and it feels as if my comments and participation doesn't matter. I feel so uncomfortable having to do group projects because I'm always the odd one out. Students will look at me and think for a couple of seconds whether they want to be in a group with me. Then they'll decide to walk to another area of the classroom to find a partner. I'm left to try to figure out what to do on my own. I've had about two internships in finance already, and I've gone to countless networking events. I always have to think about how I wear my hair. I've had to stop myself from getting braids. I've had to make my hair either straight or try to make it smaller, so it doesn't attract too much attention because I look so different from everyone else. In finance and my college education, I'm always looked at as not smart enough. I'm constantly placed at a disadvantage. Every time I tell people what I want to do in a future, I'm always faced with, "Are you sure? That sounds really hard. Are you sure you can do that?" While all this is happening to me, I wasn't quite sure how to feel because the insults weren't always obvious, and the racism wasn't always that obvious. I was facing micro-aggressions every single day at school. These are just a couple of things that I've had to struggle with on top of taking classes, working as much as I could, taking extracurriculars, and just trying to really survive in the American education system. With that being said, I would like to invite Karly to also add her experiences to this discussion.

**Karly:** Thank you, Sewit. I, too, have a story to share. During my time at UCLA, I attended a class on student engagement. In the class, I studied mass incarceration in Los Angeles. I exceeded very well in my academics and in my papers and etc. My teaching assistant never seemed too happy about it. One time in discussion, she asked a question, and I challenged her question. My challenge of her question proved to her that her perception of what we were studying was wrong. She didn't acknowledge what I said, and she quickly dismissed me because the thought of me being smart enough to acknowledge a hole in her argument, frustrated her. Later, I turned in a paper which was absolutely amazing, in my opinion, obviously. She deliberately gave me 89% instead of an A because she was so frustrated at the fact that I was able to combat her opinion.

Let's circle back to the students and their experience with racism in schools. Juwaun, can you tell us your story?

**Juwaun:** My story. I was in 3rd grade, and I went to a school where I was the only black kid in the school. My friends at the time had mentioned, "Oh let's have a Nerf for our recess." So, okay I brought my Nerf in. At recess, we did our little thing. I went to class after recess, and I got called into the office to speak to the principal. I didn't see anybody else. My grandma came because she called my grandma. I didn't understand what she was saying at the time but later on in my life, my grandma told me that she moved me out of the school because the principal was like oh, he's going to be a thug when he grows up. He's not going to be anything else. That really impacted my life, and what I did, my decisions, and what I did at all the other schools I went to. Because I didn't want to do anything, and I didn't want to be labeled that. That kind of messed me up.

**Karly:** Thank you Juwaun. I'm so sorry that happened to you. Ricky, what is an active racism that has harmed you?

**Ricky:** In sixth grade, my English teacher was well-spoken, who would always use good vocabulary except when he would speak to his black students. When asking for his help, he spoke to me as if I were illiterate.

He would talk very slowly and use very simple words. I tried to use the vocabulary when speaking to him, but he would just tell me to speak how I would normally talk. And because of this I was forced to speak differently just to communicate with him. It even got to the point where I'd have a comment on my essay saying that it didn't sound authentic enough. When I asked other Black students if he was doing the same thing, they said that he was. And it got to the point where even the White students started to speak to all the other Black students as he was speaking to us. This experience just made me feel inferior to other students, and it made me ashamed by my culture and heritage.

**Karly:** Thank you, Ricky. That's really interesting you say that because I have people that I went to school with that had the same experience. I never heard of it until now, and it's crazy how normal, "normal" it is for people to experience this. Ahmani, can you share what way racism has shown up in your educational journey?

**Ahmani:** In my junior year history class, my history teacher, who is a White man, said the n-word in class. It was the wrong context, and no one knew why he said it. No one in class spoke up. I regret not saying anything there. I was one of two Black people in the class. Everyone was just very upset and enraged, so we took it to admin, and admin did nothing about it. The only thing that they did was send my mom an email saying, "I'm sorry how you perceived the situation class." He apologized, but it wasn't sincere. He did not care, and nothing else happened to him. So, it went unnoticed. I was hesitant to bring it to admin in the first place because there had been lots of situations like this in my school that have just gone with anything, and they diminished my experience because they just didn't do anything. They didn't acknowledge what he did.

**Karly:** Thank you, Ahmani. Lastly, Cameron, can you please share an experience of racism you have encountered.

**Cameron:** The form of racism that I've encountered was my sophomore year in high school. It was a video that was put out by a few students. I go to a predominately Mexican school. They put a video out, and the concept was what race would you not date... and that was already an issue. That's the kind of question you shouldn't ask. But, a majority of the students said they wouldn't date Black people. The reasons for why they wouldn't date black people were very negative stereotypes that we try to get away from: we're ghetto; we're ratchet. Like, all the bad things that don't really represent us as people. They were pulling us up to basically tear us down. The older I am now, as a seventeen-year-old, that doesn't really get to me anymore because I know who I am. But, it's still not okay to... it's not okay for that to happen. The fact that my admin didn't do anything to fix that, also did not make you feel good. That was terrible. That was a terrible thing of racism that I've experienced in high school.

**Sewit:** Thank you, Cameron. Thank you all for sharing your experiences. I hear you. I see you, and I feel you. I know that this could be very challenging for a couple of us, and I just want to remind you that you are literally blazing a path for Black students that are upcoming. So, just thank you for sharing of your experiences. Our next question is: What do you believe educators need to do in order to understand and value your experiences of a black learner? I would like to invite Temple to start us off on that question.

**Temple:** I feel that in order for educators to really value our experience as a Black learner, they have to learn how to value our experience as a Black people first. I know, in my educational journey, whenever Black people are brought up in any context of learning, it's always about the struggle and middle passage and slavery. I feel like, if they uplifted the joys and inventions and contributions that we've made, it would make a huge difference.

**Sewit:** Thank you, Temple, for sharing that. I think that is very important. I definitely do agree with the statement that we are perceived as the struggling community, but we are not acknowledging all the great things that Black people have done in history. That definitely needs to be highlighted when we're talking about the Black experience. So, thank you for bringing that up. Juwaun, in response to this question, you answered empathy. Can you please tell us more about that?

**Juwaun:** I answered empathy because I feel like they should take... like Temple said... they should be able to recognize this for who we are... not the past... you know. Every time, like she said, every time we're brought up in school, it's about slavery. It's not about our triumph. I just feel like educators should be able to put their shoes where we are and understand what we've been through...how we overcame so many things in our diverse needs.

**Sewit:** Thank you. Yes, we need to recognize diversity more within our community and you know, champion that. Thank you so much for sharing that. Miles, can you please share what you believe educators need to do in order to understand and value your experiences as a black learner?

**Miles:** I think the educators need to understand the history of Black people and realize that there's more than that. There's more to it than slavery. Then, not just the educators, but also the students. There needs to be more of an emphasis on all history, instead of just being taught from a Euro-centric point of view...so that people can just know you know. Keep with that. More of just...

**Sewit:** Right, I agree with you. Thank you, Miles, for sharing. Ahmani, would you like to share your suggestions with the audience today?

**Ahmani:** Yes, I think that it's really important that they need to self-educate first... before. We need to have really important conversations because that's what's important. It is not the Black people's job to show them why we're feeling this way or why we're having this sort of reaction. It should be their own personal things ...saying, "Oh why are they feeling this way?" They should seek out that information. We should not have to put it for them. And, also, that they need to sympathize and understand. I'm bringing it back to what I said about the perception thing about my school. There's only one way to perceive racism, and that it's racist and that it's harmful. So, I think that it's important that they understand that...and that it doesn't happen again.

**Sewit:** Thank you so much for sharing that, Ahmani. I would like to thank you so much for all of you for answering this question. I understand that in trying to educate, it comes with emotional labor. What that means is just it's a very heavy and deep topic. Having to explain this over and over and over again. So, I really want to echo what Ahmani said about having to self-educate yourselves. There are resources out there, and you should lean on the Black people to just explain their experience and potentially help guide,

but a lot of education should lean on the person. That, you know, find that on their own. Really, be persistent and determined about figuring out how to about how to aid Black students in the American system. So, thank you all for answering this question. Now, I would like to pass it on to Karly.

**Karly:** Thank you, Sewit. The next question on our panel is what might you need or want from the adults when you return to school in person or remotely so that a school is a safer place and you feel valued?

Jordan: Can you start off for us please?

**Jordan:** I think that what we need to do to feel more empowered and safe when we come back is to have our experiences recognized in a more normal manner...like, outside the couple of Black student union assemblies that some people are deciding to go to. I feel like it just needs to be talked about comfortably between teachers...and maybe even learned about...just what we're going through and how it's not all negative...so that we can feel safe and feel empowered to just talk about all of the positive experiences that come along with being a Black person. That's what I think would make me feel more safe coming back, especially with what's going on right now.

**Karly:** Thank you, Jordan. I would definitely agree. Ricky: What might you need?

**Ricky:** Similar to what Jordan said. I would just want for teachers to recognize experiences with racism and accept that racism is still a part of today's society...because the first steps in getting rid of anything is recognizing that it exists. I think once that they do that, we can overcome together in this community and, possibly, create a stronger and more powerful community.

**Karly:** Thank you, Ricky. I most definitely agree. I think that the first step to actually having action tools and stuff is simply acknowledging that they exist. Brianna: Please share with the audience your suggestions.

**Brianna:** Similar to what Ricky and Jordan said. I do think that it's clear that nobody is born with racist thoughts; it's taught. So, with that being said, I think that if schools want to see a huge change, they need to target the parents and the home environment. That is where acknowledgement and recognition needs to start.

**Karly:** And, Cameron, what is it that you feel that you need to feel safe and valued?

**Cameron:** Like my fellow students have said so far, definitely acknowledgement. But, I feel like with acknowledgement, you need to educate yourselves. Then, after education, have initiative. So, what I mean by that is... it's easy to push happenings under the rug and ignore it because it's easier... and it makes you feel better because you don't have to acknowledge what's happening. But I feel like the reason people don't like to acknowledge things is because they don't want to admit that it could be them. And, that's where the educating comes in. It's educating yourself to know what is okay to say... what's not okay to say.... what's okay to do...what's not okay to do... by your students, or even by yourself, because they may affect your students. But these are also going to be new characteristics that we see you as. So, I definitely say, educate yourselves on Black people and the Black experience. Show that you know how to deal with Black students. Then have initiative. I would say this a lot of times...where they choose not to do anything. I feel like if, say a racial situation happens... someone's doing something negative toward Black student and

Mexican students...and the teacher's like...I'm going to ignore it... like in my situation. I think that by not stopping students from doing things, you kind of condone their actions, which further increases the action. If you let students know that it's okay to make racist comments, and you're not going to get in trouble, they are going to continue making racist comments. When other students see that, they are also going to believe that it is okay for them to do the same because it's not a punishable offense. I believe that making sure students know it is not okay to make these comments. If you have these thoughts, keep it in your head. I think that's the important thing. And educating them as well so that maybe they won't have those thoughts in their heads and maybe that they will be more...They'll decide and they're in their brain...that, you know, maybe I was wrong and there's something I can do to change. I think it's important for teachers to really have initiative and educate themselves and then further educate the students.

**Karly:** Thank you, Cameron. I definitely, definitely agree. It's a great set of action items and back to Brianna, thank you. Everything you said was valid. I missed that. I was supposed to go back to that. I wanted to thank all of our panelists. All of your experiences are valid. Your anger, your discontent, you're upsetness. Everything you're feeling is valid. I genuinely appreciate you sharing your stories and telling us how you feel...what you would like...what you don't like. We hope that this conversation will definitely make a shift in education and equity in education for... not only Black students... but for all students... because it's not just a Black student problem. It's a minority student problem. So, thank you.

**Felicia:** Thank you, everyone. Thank you, Karly, and Sewit and all of these amazing young people. I don't even know what to say. The word that comes to mind is just “incredible”. On behalf of San Diego County Office of Education and educators that are here with us today... who may see this video in the next weeks, months, or even years ahead... I just want to thank you so much for being here today in your authenticity and in your true self. I'm literally standing in awe of your courage and your beautiful presence. That is not bound by our virtual reality. Us adults, we have big work to do. I'm so incredibly grateful that your stories will serve as a reminder moving forward. Today, you have all given us our call to action. With that said, to the educators, if we're going to effectively and systemically improve outcomes and experiences for Black children, not only do we have to continue to invite them to the table, but we have to be willing to listen — even when what they say makes us uncomfortable. With that said, I also like to thank the educators in every capacity who are with us today. Classroom educators, counselors, psychologists, administrators, parents, community members, credible messengers, I thank you for showing up today and showing the great courage and vulnerability in you being here with us.

I thought it would be fitting if I close my section with the lyrics of Young, Gifted and Black. We titled this discussion by that name, but I want to just read the lyrics to you, and after I read the lyrics, I will be turning it over to Anthony Ceja, who will... in true restorative reform... I'm sorry in true to restorative practices...we're going to...he's going to facilitate a closing. Anytime we do a restorative approach, there's an official opening and there's an official closing. Anthony's going to facilitate that. But first, the lyrics to Young, Gifted and Black: "To be young, gifted, and black. Oh, what a lovely precious dream to be young gifted and black. Open your heart to what I mean and the whole world you know there are billion boys and girls who are young, gifted, and Black and that's a fact. Young gifted and black. We must begin to tell our young there's a whole world waiting for you. This is a quest that is just begun. When you feel really low, there's a great truth you should know. When you're young, gifted, and Black your souls intact. Young, gifted and black how I long to know the truth. There are times when I look back and I'm haunted by my

youth. Oh, but my joy of today is that we can call all and be proud to say to be young, gifted and Black is where it's at."

Again, thank you so much. I'm now going to turn it over to Anthony Ceja who is now going to facilitate our closing circle.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Felicia. That was powerful. All of our panelists and our moderators... we believe that... kind of... part of the restorative process. When we say "restore" ...by the way... we mean the healing of our community begins by all of us being willing to listen. But, it also begins by people, like yourselves, being brave enough to speak your truth. By us listening, we gain an understanding in empathy and even in compassion, right, as we move forward as educators. So, you really showed a lot of courage today, and we really, really appreciate you all. I know for myself, this is a part of my restorative journey... just listening to you all. So, what I'm going to do is... I want to just prepare you. I want to ask you to give some closing thoughts. Just something that you're leaving, even yourself, that you're leaving today with. Something that you're kind of... that you were able to gain from this experience...either speaking out your truth or even listening to colleagues. Something, maybe a last message that you would like to give. Ahmani, we're going to start with you. If you don't mind, just kind of give us your closing message.

**Ahmani:** I'm glad I was able to speak out about a lot of these things, and I definitely received and listened to all of these other experiences that I didn't know about.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Ahmani. Brianna: Would you give us your closing thoughts?

**Brianna:** I'm really glad I got to do this because I know my situation could have just been minor, but I see that everyone else can go through the same exact thing and not even realize that it could have been impacting them. So, for everyone to come out and say their stories...it's really powerful.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Brianna. Cameron: Would you give us your closing thoughts please?

**Cameron:** I am extremely grateful for this experience, and it has taught me a lot that, you know, I am not the one with issues. Going into this I knew that, but seeing how common, you know, we all have had it pretty much the same. It's bittersweet, but it's nice to know that we've all made it to this spot. So, thank you.

**Anthony:** Thank you Cameron. And then Jordan: Would you be willing?

**Jordan:** My biggest takeaway was that we are not alone. We've all experienced some form of dehumanization and, from what we've seen today, it's not all negative... because we've been brought together and been empowered by it.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Jordan. Juwan: Would you give us some closing thoughts please?

**Juwan:** I just want to say... I'm grateful for this experience because... I don't know, I'm at a loss for words. I think I appreciate everybody for listening, and I appreciate everybody sharing their story. It's amazing. Like Jordan said, "We are not alone." I just appreciate everybody.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Juwaun. Miles: Can you give us your closing thoughts, please?

**Miles:** It is a shame that this experience has happened to so many people. All I want to say is just for everyone that has had an experience with racism in their school, which is supposed to be a safe place... a place for learning... that they need to speak out against it.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Miles.

**Miles:** While it is bad, besides that, I'm glad that it's given us the opportunity to meet like this and discuss solutions also.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Miles. Then, Ricky: Would you give us some closing thoughts please?

**Ricky:** I'm very thankful to be a part of this panel and to listen to these incredible stories. I just I'm glad that we're recognizing the problems and moving looking forward to solve them. So, this is why I'm honored to be a part of this panel.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Ricky. Then, Temple: Would you give us your closing thoughts please?

**Temple:** I also feel really grateful to be having this experience and opportunity. I don't think comforted it is the right word because you shouldn't obviously be comforted by others having similar experiences when they are that traumatic, but I do feel a sense of togetherness from this. Hearing these stories and hearing how you guys spoke, it fans the flames in myself to really want to continue to make change.

**Anthony:** Thank you, Temple, and, by the way, you did mention feeling comforted, and I think that is a key thing when people like yourselves come together with these courageous kind of statements. It really... you find commonalities... and there is comfort in that, right? So, thank you for bringing that up, Temple. And then I really want to thank our moderators for doing such a great job. We'd like to give you also a chance to really, you know, give us your closing comment. Something that you kind of experienced in this. So, we'll start with you, Karly, if you don't mind.

**Karly:** I am first extremely grateful that this is a conversation being held. As a student, a current student and a student that will be a student for a while, I think that this is very important. I'm not sure if people really understand, but going up until you're in college... school is like what you do. At least for me it was so. It's like when your life revolves around school, you're always at school... you're playing sports at school... you're doing plays at school. It's very important to you and what happens there is very developmental. Whereas, administrators and teachers can kind of just feel like, oh yeah, this is just my job, but, like, I do this...I fish...I golf... and that's just work. It's not just school. It's not just school for students. It's much bigger than that. So, to see educators actually take into account the experiences of students is very important. I particularly want to go into equity. Equity in education, specifically in the college level for Black students. To see people doing that is amazing. I don't want to be the only person not feel good doing that. It's definitely the bigger. My interest came to equity in education, like being at UCLA, and already being at a 4%, 3%... maybe 5 at the most...of Black students. And, in every quarter, somebody was

dropping out. It is very rare...it is very rare that you actually graduate with everyone that you came in with. I mean, my freshman year... so many people just fell through the cracks...not because they couldn't... not because they weren't smart enough... but just resources...or lnot having anyone to tell them what to do and being a first-generation student and not knowing anything about college... not knowing anyone in college. I'm very grateful for this conversation.

**Anthony:** Thank you so much Karly. Sewit?

**Sewit:** I just want to say that I'm in such awe of all of the high school students on the panel. I truly, when I was in high school didn't have the language. I didn't have the courage, and I just didn't have the self-awareness to truly speak up about this. I just want to tell each and every one of you: I'm so proud of you, and I'm so happy that you guys are all here today to really share your experience of education, especially during a time like this where it could be very challenging for you. I do want to echo what Karly was saying because it was exactly what I was thinking right now. I was given a "seat" at the table at UCLA, but I didn't know what to do with that seat because all through high school I wasn't shared the, you know, the things that I needed to know to survive in college. And that meant that I had to work twice as hard as everyone else around me just to be in the same spot that they were. Because they were essentially given and taught the secret agenda of you know, surviving and excelling in college. They were told what to do professionally, for example at networking actives. They knew exactly what to do, while I was standing right there next to them... not knowing what was going on. I had to really try to figure out what to do. Financially, I have no idea what to do when I got a job in college and how to manage that. Also, how manage my time with working a job and having to go to school...something that my peers didn't have to figure out more. And that is one thing that I've always felt wasn't factored into the education system. The fact that I had to work a job to survive and be at that spot, but the guy sitting right next to me... all he had to do was go to class and go home and party all night. I could not have done that. Academically, I didn't know how to go to office hours. I didn't know how to study. I didn't know how to do a lot of these different things that my peers already knew. And something that I realized when I was at college is there's something called "testing," and it's something that my peers all had access to. It was testing, so they can get practice exams and practice problems and homework problems and all this different stuff. That is something that is not accessible to me because I don't have the, the plug. I don't have that access or the resources, and that is so unfair to me. I know that I didn't know that going into college. I just really want to echo what Karly was saying. I feel like I have to work twice as hard as everyone else just because of where I am and where I came from, excuse me, and who I am. So, I just want to say that, to say that... in high school, I genuinely feel like that there should be more of a conversation of not how to get to college, but how to survive and get through college. You know, graduate in four or whatever couple years. Really, connecting the dots between how can I get from here to here. I've had to do my journey all on my own, but I've been lucky enough to find a couple of Black mentors at UCLA that really gave me the secret agenda and told me the things to do or do not do. Without them, I generally feel like I would not be able to graduate at UCLA next year or achieve the goal that I wanted to achieve. I just want to wrap it up with that... and just stay thank you all to the panelists. I'm so proud of you, and I can't wait to see where you guys will go next.

**Anthony:** Thank you so much, Sewit and Carly, for your comments. It was just powerful. I feel emotional, and I'm kind of like going... wow, man, the power of your voices are part of my restorative journey. When

we speak and when we...when we really speak with this kind of authenticity... this is the beginning of giving people the opportunity to learn. Authentic voice, authentic experience and so those of us who have been listening, it's part of our restorative journey. We're, hopefully when we go back in the fall and, you know K-12 or whether we're part of a University education, that we would really truly do everything we can to restore people's values as human beings. Somebody... one of the panelists mentioned, I think it was Jordan or somebody said... said about we need to get better at humanizing...to seeing and hearing the human experience and then valuing it. We know that in good restorative practices, in effect, restorative practices, we do like Sewit and Karly have done for all the panelists. Because, if you just watch and listen to what they did. every single panelist that spoke their truth... they thanked them. They acknowledged them. They honored them and they valued them. That is what we need to do as human beings with each other. That is what we need to do lift each other up. You guys did an amazing, amazing restorative practice... amazing job of doing that... so thank you so much for everything that you've done. And, Dr. Fabiola Bagula, we thank you so much as leading up our Equity department. You're just an amazing human being. She is the one who has helped us to really have this kind of forum, and we'd like to hear from you... some of your closing thoughts to kind of help us. Thank you.

**Fabiola:** Firstly, I want to start by thanking all of the young people today... by not only being your authentic selves but sharing your story. I can guarantee you that if we were in person, you would have a standing ovation right now because we were all just touched by your stories. I know that I will be sitting with some of your words for a very long time. I hope that I'm not complicit in creating situations that you described. With that, I want to say that we need to continue to listen to our youth. We need to continue to lean into their stories. We need to intentionally interrupt the things that are getting in their way and that are dehumanizing to them. It's our moral obligation to do so and so I appreciate the call to action that all of you gave us.

The Equity department will be continuing this work. This was our launching event. And so, our continuing work is our learning sessions. So, our hope would be that you signed up to our learning sessions. Today you experienced a restorative dialogue with students. The first learning session would be about a restore to dialogue with adults. The second session will be how to plan for those. And then, the third session is for whatever emerges. We have all of these links to register. It is our hope that every school... every single school across San Diego county... listens to their students, listens to their testimony, and then does something about it. We have a really strong call to action this morning. I want to thank you again for joining us... for joining us this morning.

Then lastly, this was also a team effort. I want to thank all of the adults that were on the team: Melissa Spadin, Julie Goldman, Anthony Ceja, Jennifer Vermillion, Felicia Singleton and also Andrew who has been helping us with our IT and technology, and lastly, Sandra Walden, as well, who is the magic behind the scenes. I want to thank you all again for joining us today. This was a very important learning session for all of us. Like I said before, I will be holding to some of your words for a very long time... and also, then strive to interrupt and change those systems in whatever way I can... to make sure that every single student is seen in the way that we saw you today. So, thank you. Thank you, everybody.