

BPT

Black Student Wellbeing study

#Black Students Talk:

(UN) belonging in university



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@waitingtcreate

#BlackStudentsTalk

BLACK STUDENTS ARE NOT A MONOLITH

Black students feel as if we continuously have to adapt, or present, different parts of ourselves in different spaces - this can be exhausting. We all have different interests, backgrounds, cultures, experiences and personalities. We are not the spokesperson for all Black students or people.

The Black student experience is nuanced and multifaceted - just as we are as people. Our experiences as a collective are valid, but they also defer and there is power in that.



'NOT WHITE ENOUGH, NOT BLACK ENOUGH'

Sometimes we feel as if we are not Black enough for Black spaces, and not white enough for white spaces within university - especially when we are not afforded the same leniency, to make mistakes or learn, as non-Black students.

This can result in us finding it hard to form deeper, meaningful friendships due to the expectations, narratives, and social pressure that we experience. Distancing ourselves from others because we don't have a safe space can make university hard to navigate and a lonely place to be.

Loneliness and feeling like we constantly have to live up to standards set by others can affect our mental health. When we feel validated, accepted, and valued within universities, we are given room to thrive and simply be ourselves - a luxury that isn't always afforded to us.

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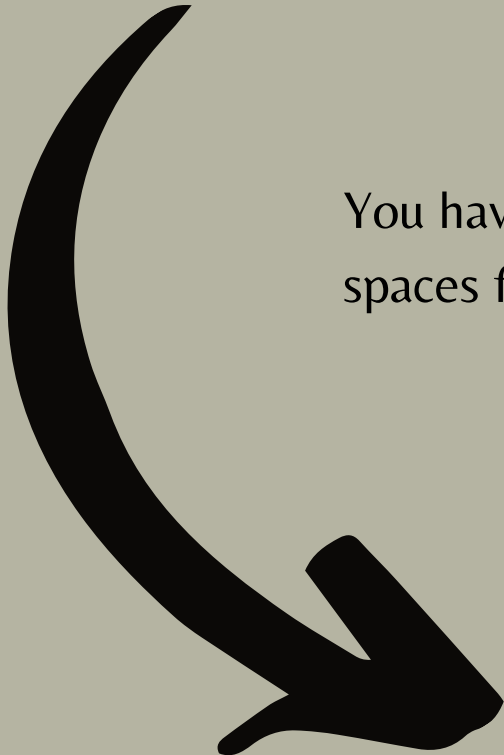
SIGNS A BLACK STUDENT IS STRUGGLING WITH (UN)BELONGING

- Withdrawing from university activities or friends
- Lower engagement with university work
- Increased levels of anxiety
- Low mood/depression
- Feeling angrier
- Increased levels of stress
- Mistrust of university staff, peers, and the institution
- Drinking more, or participating in other risk-taking behaviours
- Tiredness and insomnia



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(UN)BELONGING: TAKING UP SPACE & CENTERING JOY



You have a right to take up space, and be yourself. Creating safe spaces for yourself can protect your wellbeing and inner peace.

You pay money to be at university and are therefore entitled to also have a good standard of education.

It is not your responsibility to make people feel comfortable. Other people's (un)comfortability is not your responsibility.

Centering joy by re-defining what belonging within university means to you, and giving yourself permission to reclaim your experiences and identity, gives you the chance to understand yourself better by your own standards.



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AFFIRMATIONS FOR BLACK STUDENTS

I am allowed to take up space.

I can pursue my dreams by my own standards and expectations - I don't have to fit the mold others have set for me.

I have a right to use my voice and be affirmed in my decisions.

I can be myself and create my own safe space by centering my joy.

Rest is important, and I will prioritise my peace, my mental health, and myself- no matter what that looks like.



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WHAT UNIVERSITIES CAN DO: HOW TO SUPPORT BLACK STUDENTS

1. Believe us when we say we are struggling. We can't always be strong, and sometimes we need help like any other student.
2. Better access to counseling and mental health services - there needs to be more diversity in mental health.
3. Ask us! "I've seen you've been a bit more withdrawn, are you doing ok? How can I help you?"
4. When we identify a problem, it is not to threaten the institution but, rather to create safe spaces for us and other students to better the institution and make sure everyone feels that they belong.
5. Creating more than one type of safe space for Black students.
6. Hiring more Black academics/lecturers/professors. Representation matters, and when we see ourselves reflected in higher education spaces we are affirmed in our dreams.

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USEFUL SERVICES

- Student Minds (Resources): www.studentminds.org.uk
- Student Space (Resources, text, email and phone support):
www.studentspace.org.uk
- Togetherall (Online peer support): www.togetherall.com
- Papyrus (Suicide Hopeline): 0800 068 4141 / www.papyrus-uk.org
- Mermaids (For the Trans & Non-binary community): mermaidsuk.org.uk
- Stonewall (For the LGBTQ+ community): stonewall.org.uk

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USEFUL SERVICES

- The Black, African and Asian Therapy Network (BAATN): www.baatn.org.uk
- Shout (text support): 85258
- ADHD Babes (support group); <https://linktr.ee/adhdbabes>
- Bounce Black (trauma-informed coaching); <https://bounceblack.org>
- Black Minds Matter UK: www.blackmindsmatteruk.com
- Voice Collective (for people that hear voices): voicollective.co.uk

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