



# DIVERSITY SERIES

SPONSORED BY ODHE AND SSU DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION



# BELOVED COMMUNITY

- The meaning of beloved community is rooted in love, reconciliation and belonging. In times of division and conflict, it sustains us, makes us more resilient, and enables us to find pathways forward together.

## Prompt 1:

- Tell us about a time in which you felt like you belonged unconditionally, or tell us about a time in which you felt you didn't belong.

# SOFIA MIKHAILICHENKO

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CICxrM7RAzE>





# CHAIMA TOUNSI

- My flight to the United-States was my first travel experience outside of my country, Tunisia. I was a little bit afraid in the beginning as it was a whole new experience to me to live away from my family, friends, and country, however I was always ready for new challenges. Since I've arrived to the US, I've met a lot of incredibly kind people who made me sometimes forget that I'm not at home. One memorable experience that made me feel that I belong here is when my friendship family, Bonnie and Kenny, had me in their house in Kentucky. They were extremely welcoming and made me feel like I was part of them. They cooked American food for me, took me on a ride to the mountains on a raider, made me harvest corns, and let me ride their horse. They made all kind of efforts to make me feel comfortable, and I couldn't feel happier and more blessed to be among them. The next time I went to their house, I wore a Traditional Tunisian dress called Jebba, brought some traditional Tunisian jewelry and food for them and talked to them for hours about our culture, politics, my family, everything. It was an enriching experience to share about my background and hear about theirs, I was delighted to notice the similarities between our cultures but especially the differences, it's so impressing how culture affects people in many ways. The conclusion from that experience is that kind people with kind hearts are everywhere in the world, it doesn't matter where you're from or what's your story to be nice, all it requires is to be human and embrace the differences.



# CHAIMA TOUNSI





# MAKARAND LAHANE

- I would like to begin with my experience where I felt like I didn't belong here because this incident also leads into the next section where I describe the events where I felt belonged. During my freshman year, I was kind of having a hard time because of my accent, for example, I would often ask a question in class, but I would have to repeat it multiple times in order for the professor to completely understand the question. And this was getting kind of awkward for me, and I was almost not willing to ask any more questions. But two events I would like to describe here happened with my Geometry and English professors, wherein the English class I had to repeat a question multiple times, but the professor was really kind and generous he just put the blame on his hearing skills and motivated me indirectly to go ahead with my questions. A similar incident also happened with my Geometry professor where he said to me after class that it wasn't anything related to me or my accent, and he also kind of blamed his hearing. But these incidents really helped me feel comfortable and I really felt like I belonged here. Another really important incident that happened in my freshman year that really motivated me through my academic journey and made me feel welcomed to this university was in my first semester. I was attending Intro Game Programming with Professor Jason Witherell, and I shared with him all the projects that I had worked on thus far. Jason was so kind to not just give me feedback regarding all the projects, but he also insisted on accelerating my graduation to 3 years instead of 4 years. He isn't my official academic advisor, but he still went out of his way to help me and organize and plan out all the classes in order to meet the desired expectation. I think this was the best experience for me at Shawnee, at that moment I was extremely happy to be a student at Shawnee State University, and I definitely felt like I belonged here.

# SHERRI PETROVICH

- Community is very important to me. There have been times when I felt very alone and then other times, when my community surrounded me and helped me through a very difficult situation. The most memorable time happened about 10 years ago when my family was struck with a tragedy and I felt like the floor of my life was ripped out from under me. I was trying to hold it all together, but I couldn't do it alone. My community (which consisted of some wonderful people in my church) came alongside to support, encourage, and offer tangible as well as emotional support. Amazingly, I did not fall apart! I was able to walk through that time knowing that a great group of people loved me and supported me. They showed me what community was all about and how important it is to have a place of belonging. It has shown me how important it is to offer that same type of support to others; especially to those who are facing things on their own, who are new to the area, or who may not have the resources to succeed. My understanding of community propels me to listen and encourage students who show up at my office. I may not have the answers, but I can do my best to find those who do, and to point them in the right direction, hopefully allowing them to feel supported and encouraged.



# LOREN HORTEN

- Throughout high school, I continuously felt as if I didn't "belong". With all of the cliques and the constant drama. I felt that it was best if I just stayed to myself. And of course isolating myself in such a manner took a huge toll on me. It was always hard to stay focused without any friends or family around to support me. I was alone. So I kept my head down for those dreadful four years of schooling. Eventually, my grades began to slip. I allowed my grades to define me. I allowed my grades define me so much to the point that I had the feeling that maybe I deserved what I was going through. I graduated with the class of 2021 and felt as if I had no place to go. I was applying to college after college. I'd jog down to my mail box everyday hoping that there would be an acceptance letter. But I started to lose the little bit of hope that I had left within me every time that there was a nicely written denial letter. One day, I opened my email to scroll through the endless amount of college spam mail. Only to find an email from Shawnee State University , I was filled with joy when I found an acceptance letter. When I was accepted, I knew I had a chance. I contacted my assigned academic advisor immediately and started packing. It was a long 10 hour journey to get here, but it has been more than worth it! The faculty and staff were actually happy to help me. Every student I came across met me with squinted eyes and a beaming smile under their masks. I was accepted, I was welcomed, and most importantly, I felt like I belonged. I will never forget my experience here at Shawnee State University. And I am more than grateful that I was given a chance to attend.





# CASSIE LINK

- Poem

## **Belonging Unconditionally**

The power of a loving hug

Sometimes they are nice and snug

A wonderful moment that we share

To show how much you really care!



# ANONYMOUS

- The first time I feel like I didn't belong was when I was first sexually abused. I felt like I was in a different world due to the abuse. The abuse went on from 5-16yrs old. I felt lost and didn't understand how to fit in.



# ANONYMOUS

- Poem

## Conditionally Belonging

You turned your back to me  
The group left and didn't see

I wasn't done

I've almost won

Alone, I reach the victory 🎓



# MULTICULTURALISM & DIVERSITY

- Multiculturalism goes hand in hand with diversity in that you support and empower the presence of many distinct cultures and ethnic groups. Being able to support and empower other cultures makes our community much more diverse and richer. After all, a cake baked with a single ingredient is never going to taste as good as one baked with the proper ingredients.

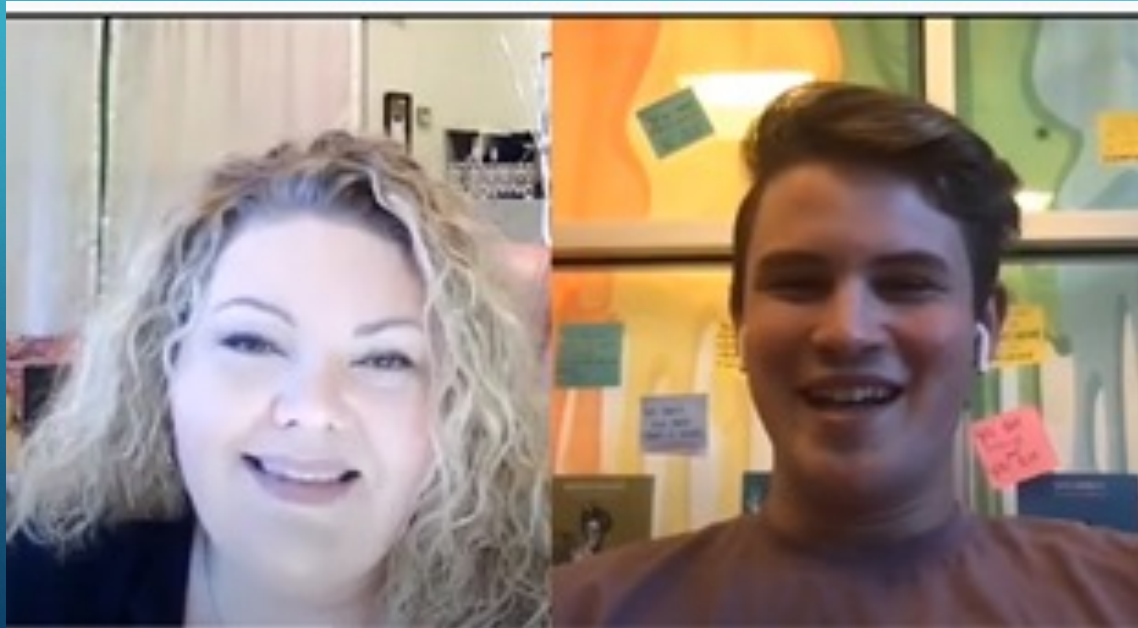
## Prompt 2:

- In some ways, the American culture devalues and dehumanizes people based on their identities. Who are your people? How has this shaped you? What is the story of your people? What would it take to create communities that value each person?



# JACOB SMATHERS & CHRISTINA BAKER

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXgdZBmhCeM>



# GHAIDA BOUCHAALA

- Studying within a multicultural environment and with people from different backgrounds was a way for me to deduce that what makes us diverse, empowers us. It makes us more tolerant, more open, and more friendly, to the point of transcending materialism and considering the other as a source that enriches us. Being an international student at Shawnee State University is just amazing! The best part of my experience so far is people. I have never felt that I don't belong, rather, I can say now that I have more than one family. The differences between us are plenty; we have different ages, backgrounds, standpoints, religions, languages, and not to forget that we come from different cultures. I proudly managed to overcome our differences and use them to our advantage. Four months had passed since I had been in the United States, but I could see how I brought value to the people around me through my culture. And, guess what? Many of my American and international friends now have 'Travel to Tunisia' on their bucket lists. I want to highlight my journey with Shawnee's Intermission - Campus Ministry -. Through them, I had the opportunity to learn more about Christianity and to connect with many exceptional people with whom fruitful interactions have taken place. As a result, I feel a strong bond with every member of the community despite being a Muslim. " You mean so much to this group and we love having you around... We want to learn more about you and your home... You fit so well here. You rock! " This was one of the Intermission community leaders' testimonials. I am absolutely convinced that it is possible and necessary for religions and cultures to coexist in peace. We must all together, build a cultural and intellectual bridge based on mutual benefit and common values. This bridge is built through continuous, open, and frank dialogue by listening to each other, openly sharing our opinions, and developing mutual understandings. Finally, I would like to wrap up my speech with this inspiring quote from the American writer, artist, and social activist Robert Alan who states that "Cultural differences should not separate us from each other, but rather cultural diversity brings a collective strength that can benefit all of humanity."





# MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Microaggressions can be a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group, such as a racial or ethnic minority. These can show up in everyday life and sometimes one may not even realize it.

## Prompt 3:

What do you feel is the significance of ethnicity and its effect on our lives?

What stands out to you about the definition of microaggressions?

Have you experienced microaggressions in your life?

What do you want others to know about the effect these situations have on others?

# DEMETRIUS BROWN, CICADA LEWIS AND D'ANDRE PRICE

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I\\_Ye\\_XLXIOs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_Ye_XLXIOs)





# NICHOLAS BENNETT

- For my submission, I found myself most comfortable just writing it out. For me the significance of ethnicity lies solely in our diversity. Ethnicity and culture are part of what make us different from one another and I think that's a great thing, it makes people unique. The definition of microaggression was interesting to me because I didn't know that even when unintentional it was still considered a microaggression. I always figured if someone didn't know something about say a particular culture and they said something about that culture they didn't realize was maybe a microaggression then that was just maybe be considered ignorant. Understanding that even though not intentional that impact or harm is still done and is something that definitely stood out to me. I honestly don't know if I've really dealt with microaggressions. I would say yes, they have been directed towards me before, as I'm sure they have for almost everyone, but I'm the kind of person that lets a lot of water roll off my shoulders so if it was something small enough to be considered a microaggression I probably let it roll off of me and forgot all about it later that day. Its hard for me to answer the last section of the prompt when it comes to letting people know about the effect these situations have on others. This is because for me I always try to make sure the little things don't get to me since if someone has a problem with me for some reason and they cant be direct and open up about it then in my eyes that's their problem and not mine. Thank you for the opportunity to talk about this topic and share my experience and thoughts! I found it to be a really good self reflection time.



## PERSONAL IMPACT

- Everyone has a special gift, and in this gift, the ability to bring positivity to anyone and anywhere you go. The positivity and laughter you bring has a lasting and noticeable impact on those around you, even if it isn't directly noticed. Meaning that everyone has the power within them to make a difference and bring happiness to someone's day, week, and even life.

### Prompt 4:

What is a gift that you bring to others naturally just by being yourself?

How do you use that gift to positively impact your campus community?

Can you share a story of a time in which you used or witnessed the use of a natural gift and how it impacted the community in which it happened?



# NICHOLAS BENNETT & GLENNA HECKLER-TODT

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXX4Ud-zzPo>



# CHAIMA TOUNSI

- Being in Shawnee State University as an international student impacted my personality like no other experience I've ever had. Being around people from different backgrounds, cultures, and visions enriched my perspective and opened my eyes to different things that I wasn't seeing before.





# SOCIAL JUSTICE

- Social Justice is all about inciting equality in wealth, opportunities, and privileges within a society. Inciting this equality can be done in many ways and have a very broad affect across a whole group of individuals.

## Prompt 5:

What is the significance of race and its effects on our daily lives?

How is social injustice a form of trauma and what impact does it have on minority communities and culture?

How does one's personal trauma affect the need for social justice?

What privileges do you have and what can you do or have you done to affect social change?

# REBECCA SCHOLL, DR. DREW FEIGHT & MONIQUE HARMON

- <https://youtu.be/B5EQR-7gwS0>





# HEIDI BENDER

- I am submitting this artwork, created several years ago, in response to: "What privileges do you have, and how can you use them to effect social change?" I had several experiences where I realized that I was allowed in spaces where others were not due to my status as a white, middle class, American woman. I was allowed into Costa Rica with less rigorous security than my Nicaraguan co-worker was. In my home country, the United States, I was allowed to sit in public parks for as long as I wished, and allowed to occupy public spaces without police shadowing me. I had friends that were experiencing homelessness and were not allowed to stay in these "public" spaces very long, even though they had no home to return to. A friend who is a large black man has shared with me that he is very aware of his appearance, stature, and actions in public as a matter of survival. I think of Ahmaud Arbery, going for a run and getting shot. This would likely not have happened to me. I passed through invisible barriers of many kinds that other people that I cared about could not. I could not speak for these friends as I had not lived their experiences. I could use my own position in the world, however, to reveal or bend some invisible barriers. Once revealed, maybe we could better address what they were. In the "Urban Napping Project" I built an apparatus in back of my truck that would allow me to hang a hammock partially over the public sidewalk in "California Style" parking spaces. I would pay the parking meter, and then rest, take naps, and read books, very personal, "private space" actions. What conversation would arise if a homeless person were in the hammock? A BIPOC person? An illegal immigrant? The link to the project is here: <https://www.laboflostarts.com/urban-napping> .

# MARC SCOTT

- [Social Justice](#)
- [https://maxfs-useast-01.s3.amazonaws.com/shawneehr/irs/00000072\\_marcscottdeivideo.mp4?response-cache-control=must-revalidate%2C%20post-check%3D0%2C%20pre-check%3D0&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3D%2200000072\\_marcscottdeivideo.mp4%22&X-Amz-Content-Sha256=UNSIGNED-PAYLOAD&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIAJYZPEI2GVPJCSHMQ%2F20211209%2Fus-east-1%2Fs3%2Faws4\\_request&X-Amz-Date=20211209T150043Z&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Expires=600&X-Amz-Signature=39b153825fab9875997f5ce57f580a09ec4f1e61bb651f1d53cdf8361e2a2bab](https://maxfs-useast-01.s3.amazonaws.com/shawneehr/irs/00000072_marcscottdeivideo.mp4?response-cache-control=must-revalidate%2C%20post-check%3D0%2C%20pre-check%3D0&response-content-disposition=inline%3B%20filename%3D%2200000072_marcscottdeivideo.mp4%22&X-Amz-Content-Sha256=UNSIGNED-PAYLOAD&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=AKIAJYZPEI2GVPJCSHMQ%2F20211209%2Fus-east-1%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-Date=20211209T150043Z&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Expires=600&X-Amz-Signature=39b153825fab9875997f5ce57f580a09ec4f1e61bb651f1d53cdf8361e2a2bab)