

# Creating Intentional Space for BIPOC Students to Connect, Reflect, Heal & Thrive

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3/26/2021

ID 1243

## **Abstract:**

The 2020-21 academic year has been a challenging year for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, especially students of color. Between the COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Black and anti-Asian sentiment, police brutality, and the death of community icons, many students of color have experienced endless chaos this year. Amid this pain, it is vital to have culturally relevant resources to help them persist and successfully navigate these unprecedented times. One such resource is *Letters To My Sisters & Brothers: Practical Advice to Successfully Navigate Academia as a Student of Color*. This workbook contains a collection of online responses from a survey of current undergraduate and graduate students of color across the U.S. who provide culturally relevant advice to incoming students of color on how to navigate higher education. These students offer their insight, experiences, and encouragement to aid others along their academic journey. Accompanying their testimonies, the end of each section contains an activity created to better put their advice into practice and coloring pages for additional self-care. This session will: 1) inform attendees about the *Letters To My Sisters and Brothers* workbook, 2) describe how student, faculty, and administrators can utilize this resource to support BIPOC students, and 3) provide tangible strategies about how to create intentional space for BIPOC students to connect, reflect, heal, and thrive in academia.

## **Notes:**

Bio: Nelson O. O. Zounlome, M.S.Ed. is a first-generation college student, child of immigrants, and native of South Bend, IN. He is also an author, former McNair Scholar, Ford Foundation Fellow, Herman B. Wells Graduate Fellow, and counseling psychology Ph.D. candidate at Indiana University (IU). Nelson earned bachelor's degrees in Psychology & Sociology and a master's degree in Educational Psychology from IU. He studies academic persistence and mental wellness to promote holistic healing among Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Nelson is also the founder of *Liberate The Block Collective, LLC*: an organization dedicated to helping BIPOC Communities liberate themselves and achieve their wildest dreams. In the fall, he will begin his career as an assistant professor of counseling psychology at the University of Kentucky.