

**OTHERING &
BELONGING**
CONFERENCE

OTHERING & BELONGING 2021

"Risk & The Courage to Bridge"

**POST-CONFERENCE
REPORT**

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About the Conferences

The Othering & Belonging conferences are organized by the Othering & Belonging Institute (OBI) at UC Berkeley. A research and action center housed at the University of California, Berkeley, the Othering & Belonging Institute is a global network that brings together researchers, community leaders, policymakers, culturemakers, and communicators to identify and challenge the barriers to an inclusive, just, and sustainable society in order to create transformative change.

These dynamic and uniquely curated events aim to elevate work in "othering and belonging," a critical lens developed by the Institute under the leadership of Professor John A. Powell. This framework for defining structural exclusion and inclusion in an analytical and applied framework can be used to design and advance institutions, narratives, and policies that support a more fully inclusive "we."

The Othering & Belonging conferences use evidence, narrative, and cultural-based approaches while prioritizing relationship-building that can spark new and innovative collaborations.

The belonging framework helps us cut across discipline, identity, issue-area, and national borders to propel more transformative and sustainable ideas and work.

The conferences provide a focused space where we can gather together to illuminate our understanding of structural exclusion and learn from each other more about the work,

narratives, and visions that can advance systemic inclusion, or belonging.

The Othering & Belonging conferences illustrate the Institute's deep commitment to public and community engagement. They serve as dynamic and highly interactive feedback loops where we can deepen and challenge our thinking, sharpen our strategies, strengthen our relationships, and orient our thinking and visioning in new ways to that build more fair and more just societies. Our conference curation is organized around programming which helps us grapple with some of the following questions:

- How can we create structures that support a large, diverse society, with people who are connected across cultures, religions, race, and other lines of group difference?
- What models and systems already exist and how can we strengthen them? What new or re-calibrated institutions are needed to realize a diverse and inclusive society?
- How do we form and sustain relationships, advance narratives, and build movements that truly support a larger more inclusive "we"?
- How do we respond to breaking and how can we activate bridging? How does understanding both help inform our work?
- How do we make clear connections between global models, struggles, tools, and strategies for expanding belonging? How can we prioritize and tend to our local concerns while connecting our work to global struggles and systems, in order that we may build a truly international movement of belonging?

OVERVIEW OF O&B 2021: "RISK AND THE COURAGE TO BRIDGE"

At our first three Othering & Belonging conferences, thousands of advocates, scholars, artists, and cultural workers gathered to explore belonging at the interpersonal, inter-group, and systemic levels, as well as to understand the necessity of bridging to achieve true belonging. But in a time of rapidly growing polarization, the accelerating climate crisis, and quickly-disintegrating distrust towards authority and each other, the need to bridge in order to expand our political might and achieve real solutions has only become more urgent. **At O&B 2021, we decided to center the notion of risk. Can those of us working towards justice take real risks to expand who belongs in our work—and in our circle of human concern more widely?**

An entirely online event due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, O&B 2021 featured a number of new offerings to utilize the virtual nature of the gathering, including opportunities for 1 to 1 digital bridging, a filmic poem in three parts featuring dancers and aerialists from around the Bay Area, a virtual DJ Dance Party where attendees could dance from the comfort of their own homes, and pre-event learning labs for advanced knowledge and training.

Although the virtual nature of the event limited our ability to replicate some of the more interpersonal aspects of in-person gatherings, it also allowed us to engage participants who might otherwise not be able to attend, including people from as far away as South Africa and Korea, as well as to bring new forms of artistic and cultural offerings that connected heart and body, not just mind, to our audiences. As one participant said, "This was food for the soul!"

BY THE NUMBERS

2,938

conference registrants

Largest sectors represented among participants were **Nonprofit** (38%), **Higher Education** (17%), **Government** (13%), and **Private Sector** (7%).

29

countries represented including Brazil, Colombia, Ethiopia, France, Germany, Iceland, India, Israel, Mexico, Morocco, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, South Korea, Sweden, Thailand, and Uganda

More than half (55%) of registrants were between the ages of

35-54

80+

scholarships awarded

MAINSTAGE SPEAKERS

75% of mainstage speakers were people of color

65% of mainstage presenters identified as women or nonbinary



Arlie Russell Hochschild



Akaya Windwood



Albert Samaha



ALOK



Amanda Ripley



Báyo Akómoláfé



Curtis Toler



Daniel Jolley



Deen Freelon



Eboo Patel



john a. powell



John Wood, Jr.



Joy Harjo



Judith Butler



Loretta Ross



María Teresa Kumar



Molly Crockett



Pat McCabe



Sarah Crowell



Uma Viswanathan

The Risk & Possibility of Bridging, Parts I and II

with John A. Powell & Judith Butler (Part I); and Akaya Windwood, ALOK, Joy Harjo & Báýò Akómoláfé (Part II)

watch on Youtube

watch on Youtube

On Good Conflict: What If We Called In, Rather Than Called Out?

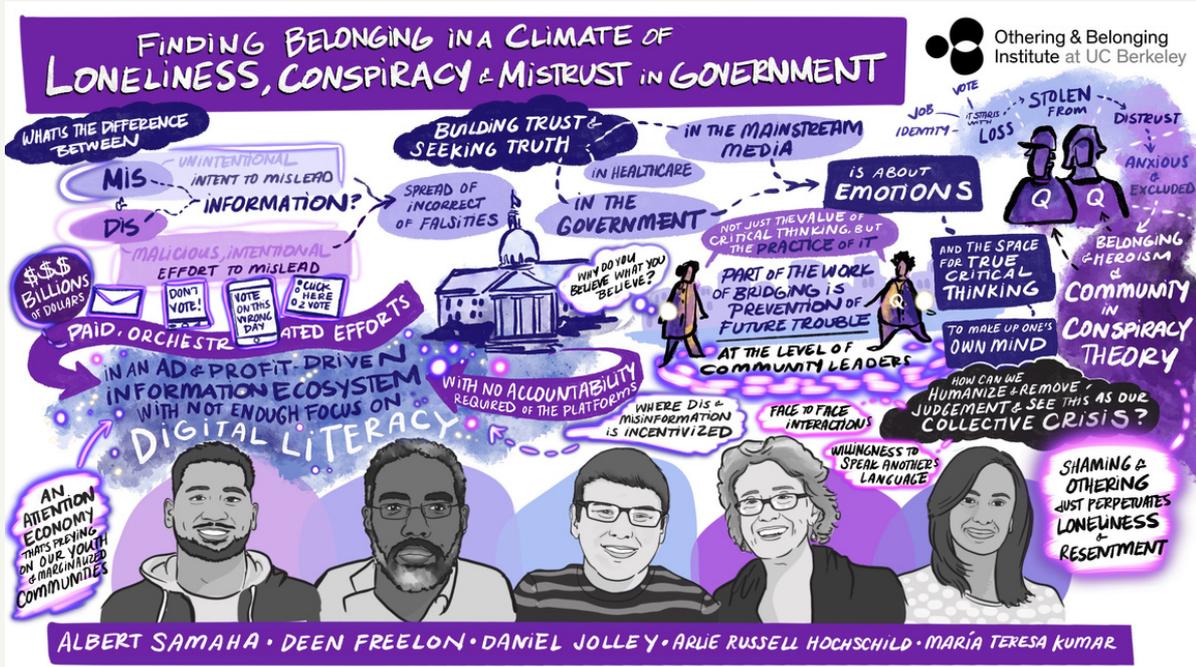
with Eboo Patel, Amanda Ripley, Curtis Toler, Molly Crockett, Loretta Ross & Pat McCabe

watch on Youtube

Finding Belonging in a Climate of Loneliness, Conspiracy, and Mistrust in Government

with Albert Samaha, Deen Freelon, Daniel Jolley, Arlie Hochschild & María Teresa Kumar

watch on Youtube



Bridging in Practice

with Uma Viswanathan, John A. Powell & John Wood, Jr.

watch on Youtube



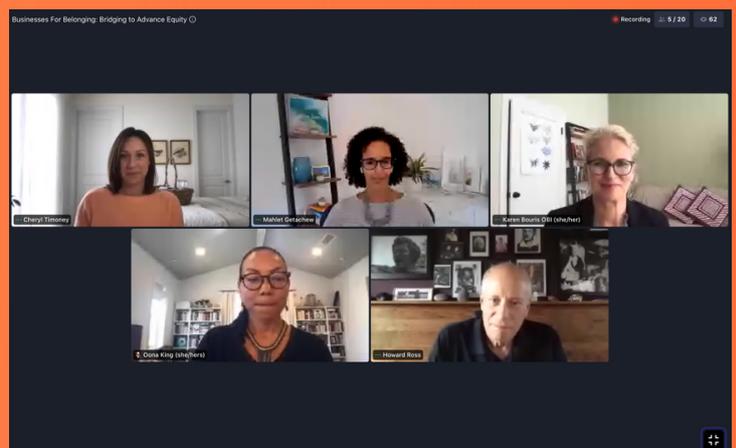
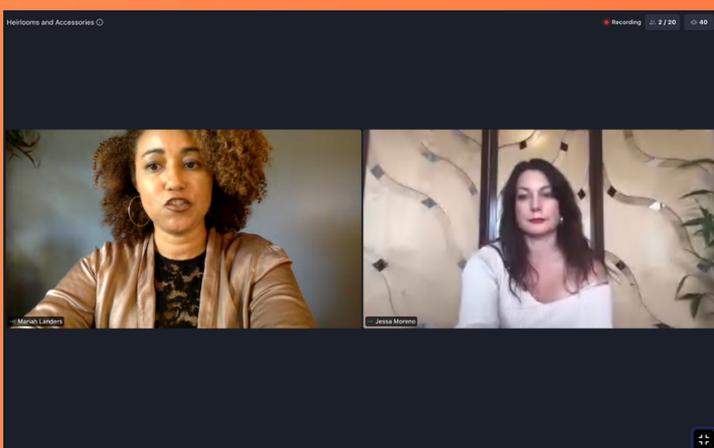
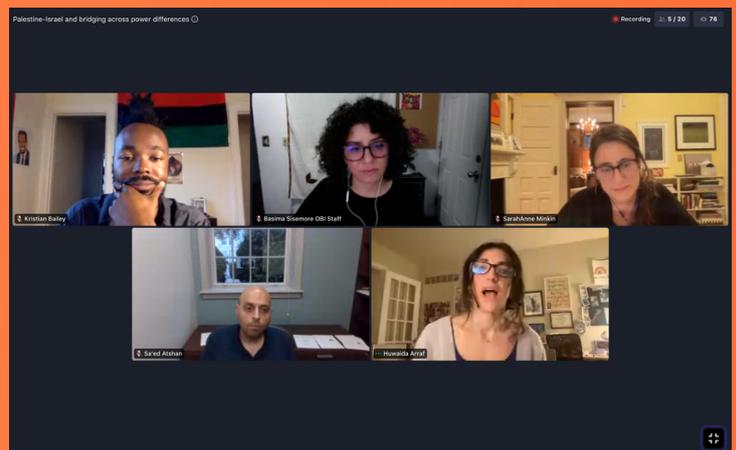
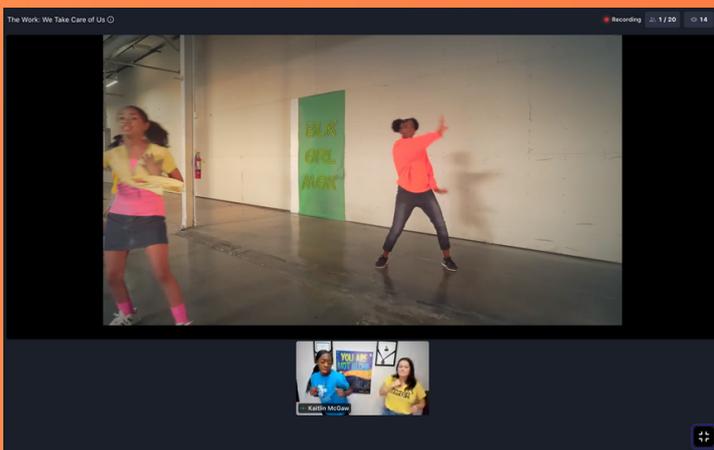
All art is by our conference illustrator, Bay Area-based graphic recorder [Abby VanMuijen](#), who illustrated each conversation as they were happening live.

View the conversations in full on our Youtube channel [here](#).

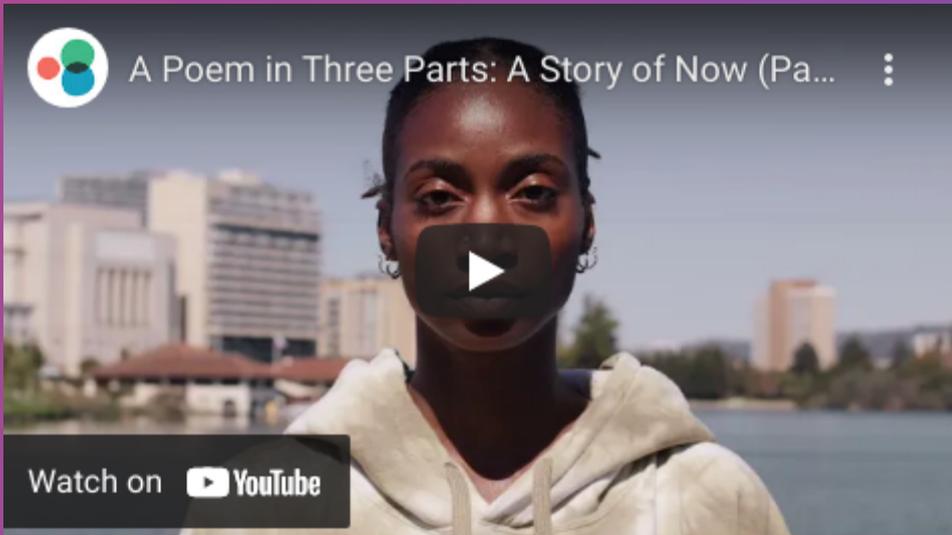
BREAKOUT SESSIONS

In addition to our mainstage offerings, we offered **16 additional breakout sessions** whereby audience members could select the sessions of most interest to them. Sessions included:

- Reimagining the Politics of Technology Creation: Towards technology for belonging
- Bridging and Belonging in Neighborhoods: Transformative change and care, starting from the block
- Across Our Homes: Bridging within and across diaspora communities
- Gathering the Faithful and the Secular: Cross-belief bridging for social justice and Belonging
- Different Histories, Parallel Stories: Black and Native people bridging for climate justice
- Safety For Who? A fishbowl bridging conversation on anti-Asian violence and policing in the Bay Area
- Breaking Patterns: A Visual Arts-Based Workshop
- The Work: We Take Care of Us (An intergenerational session with Alphabet Rockers)
- Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide: Unveiling our interdependence to transform our systems
- Businesses for Belonging: How for-Profits are bridging to advance equity & justice
- Bridging Across Black Lives Matter: A fishbowl bridging conversation
- Bridging Government & Community Toward Land, Housing & Climate Justice
- A Case Study: Palestine-Israel organizing and bridging across power differences
- Heirlooms and Accessories: Using Arts to Look at Lineage and Narrative
- Coming Together by Going to The Root: Youth bridging for climate justice
- Nothing About Us Without Us: Community-building and bridging within and with the disabled community



ARTS & CULTURE



Othering & Belonging: A Poem in Three Parts

The Othering & Belonging Institute commissioned poet Michelle "Mush" Lee to write and perform a poem in three parts on bridging and belonging for the 2021 Othering & Belonging Conference. This poem and accompanying visuals—featuring an array of dancers, aerialists, and performers of all kinds—premiered in three digital shorts directed by filmmaker Yoram Savion, with creative direction from conference emcee Sarah Crowell. View Part I, "A Story of Now," above, and parts 2 and 3 on our [Youtube channel](#).



The Space Between Us (Dance video by filmmaker Gabriel Diamond)

Sarah Crowell and Keith Hennessey are both dancers, teachers, and activists in the Bay Area. They have known each other for nearly 30 years. But they've never collaborated or connected deeply, until now. *The Space Between Us* is a radical experiment in the power of bearing witness, inviting vulnerability, and sharing movement, in a time of social distancing and racial reckoning.



DJ Dance Party with DJ Rich Medina

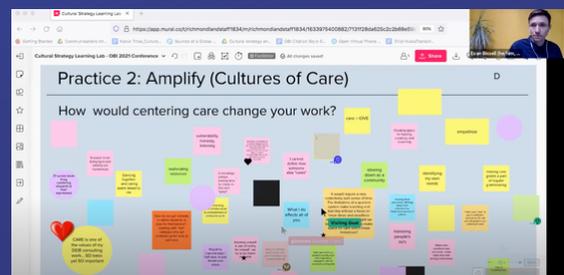
Rich Medina is an elite international DJ who, in the 30+ years since he spun his first record, has turned his young love for music into a celebrated career as a platinum-selling record producer, recording artist, poet, journalist, and Ivy League lecturer. Medina spun tracks live for the O&B audience, who could shake it out from the comfort of their living rooms if they felt the call!

PRE-CONFERENCE LEARNING LABS

Designed to dig deeper, these two-hour virtual workshops were special, limited-space offerings held before the official start of the conference that provided registrants with richer insights and trainings in key issues related to operationalizing belonging. Led by leading activists, scholars, and movement leaders, these interactive labs explored the latest thinking and strategies around movement organizing, including developing effective cultural strategies for belonging, operationalizing bridging in the real world, and utilizing best practices in digital organizing. We offered the following Learning Labs before the 2021 Othering & Belonging Conference:

Cultural Strategies for Belonging: Learning from Doing 2019-2021

What is a cultural strategy for belonging? How do we center leadership, voices, storytelling, practices and knowledge of people and communities through cultural power forged through love, resistance, survival and joy? Designed for: Artists, cultural strategy practitioners, non-profit staff, organizers and funders interested in strengthening cultural strategy in organizing, research, planning or other social change work.



Bridging to Build Power: What does bridging look like in the real world?



This lab explored questions like: What does bridging look like in the real world? What does bridging have to do with movement building or with building power? This lab featured leaders who are bridging communities and movements to find connections and belonging. Designed for: Community organizers, educators, culture makers, movement leaders

Pathways from the Climate Crisis to Justice and Belonging

This lab took a deep look at the climate crisis and how we can amplify imaginative solutions built not on leaving people behind, but on bringing everyone in. Organizers and strategists discussed how to co-create structures that strengthen our connection to place, ensure thriving ecological systems and health, equitably distribute power, and value the dignity of all work. Designed for: People working in nonprofits, government, and philanthropy locally and globally.



Digital Organizing for the Win: Shifting to new tools and aligning strategies



Reaching people where they spend their time is crucial for organizing communities and engaging a base. How are organizers integrating digital strategies into successful campaigns? What does a robust digital organizing program look like? How do organizers and communications staff work hand-in-hand to develop narratives and turn online engagement into real life action? Designed for: Organizers & communications teams from movement building organizations of all sizes and capacities.

WHAT OUR AUDIENCE SAID

91%

of attendees said they would be likely to attend a future O&B gathering

93%

of attendees said the conference offered content that will be useful in their work or studies

91%

of attendees rated the conference as "excellent" or "very good"

"Seriously well done in so many ways and on so many levels. Thank you for creating a space for reflection, connection, insights and inspiration."

"I learned an immense amount about the work of a Bridger, and the connection with the concepts of power, privilege, agency and oppression. I realized why there is such a need to step into the role of being a Bridger, the humility and patience it takes to do it well, to how one has learn the techniques become a Bridger and do the work. I also realize it not just work, but a way of "being" and how it is a practice and aspiration."

"Thank you for a thought-provoking, powerful, emotional, and enriching conference! I appreciate everyone who helped to make this happen!"

"I wish I could carry the spirit of this event back into my workplace and my life, and engage all whom I encounter in this level of authentic discourse. I will make an effort to do exactly that."

"I think the philosophical explanations and knowledge shared about love...holistic love, which includes all people, the world and the earth itself was the most profound message shared for me, and what I will share, and how during the reflection the message highlighted the value of every nation and people...Truly transformational work and I look forward to the next conference!"

"This was such an intentional space and it was very clear and obvious. Thanks for the topics and this space excited to bring back these learning into my work."

"This was one of the most thought-provoking and inspiring conferences I have attended. Great job!"

"Simply, thank you. I needed it this week. As an educator in these days, I feel really alone. These two days helped me to feel less so."

"[I had] two favorites: 'What If We Called In Rather than Called Out?' and 'Businesses for Belonging: Bridging to Advance Equity.' I really appreciated the authentic story sharing in 'Calling In,' I was in tears at one point. So poignant and powerful. Biz for Belonging helped me to understand the DEI work that other businesses are doing, their shared difficulties and wins, and gave me a sense of camaraderie."

"I really enjoyed the ways of connecting heart and body, not just mind, to the experience. This included the music, poetry, visual art, breathing/grounding, and dance."

"I am very grateful to OBI. It is such a source of inspiration and recentering. It is a place to recharge, a place to re-think assumptions and to challenge myself."

2021 CONFERENCE SPONSORS

The 2021 conference was made possible by the generous support from our sponsors, who included:

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OUR PROGRAMS