

Studenting S2E3: Black Student Community (Transcript)

Guests: Rele Orimalade (BSN), Hassanatou Koulibaly (MASS), Mel Cobbler (Student Services)

Host: Derah

Derah: Thank you all for being here today. It's a pleasure having you on this podcast, as you know, this season. This season, we're going to be discussing and focusing on building community within McGill and specifically for this episode, we're looking at building community within the Black student body.

DERAH: So just to start off, could you please tell me a little bit about yourselves and the groups you work in?

RELE: Okay I can go ahead, I can start. My name is Rele Orimalade and I'm in my fourth year at McGill as a pharmacology major. This is my first year as president of the Black Student Network of McGill. So, the Black Student Network is a service provided by SSMU - the Students Society of McGill. It's available to all McGill students. We offer social and political events by and for Black students. In addition, we host discussions and provide mentoring and resources. The main thing about BSN I'd say, though, is that it's a community. And once I started working with BSN, I noticed that wow, even within our exec. team, like we're all family, we're brothers and sisters, and I noticed that strength in community really extends to the greater McGill community. When we host events, you know, the sense of family and belonging really extends to the wider student body. And that's what I really love about BSN.

HASSANATOU: Hi, my name is Hassanatou Koulibaly, but I go by Hassa. I'm a U2 student in cognitive science with a neuroscience stream, and I'm president of MASS this year. I've been involved in MASS for three years now, first as VP Sponsorship, VP Finance and now as President. The McGill African Student Society (MASS) is a full status club whose mandate is to promote and present the rich and diverse cultures of Africa to not only the McGill community, but to the greater Montreal area. We're a group of students who are not only passionate about African oriented topics but are majority African, and we host a range of events that target different facets of African culture and African life.

MEL: So, hi, everyone, so my name is Melissa Ann Cobbler, people call me Mel for short. I'll be very honest that I was the BIPOC wellness advisor up until August of this year. There's been a new hire, thankfully, whose name is Myrlie Marcelin if I'm pronouncing her last name correctly, I really hope that I am. And in this role, when I started out, it was to connect to Black students, indigenous students, students of color. When I came here as a wellness advisor in 2019, I was in the Faculty of Science and actually the first place that I reached out to was the BSN because I was the only Black counselor on staff at the time. So, it was very important for me to allow students to

know that there was someone that they could reach out to for any mental health or physical health concerns. So, in the role, it really is to just continue to extend that through outreach, through one-on-one consultations. So Black students, regardless of the Diaspora, could feel confident and comfortable to reach out for their wellness needs.

DERAH: Thank you for. Thank you all for sharing. Just, just to Rele, you mentioned that like within the BSN, you know, with all the executives and everyone kind of feels like a family. So, you know, I kind of get their sense of inclusivity within the BSN. So just in general for everyone, what is inclusivity mean to all of you?

RELE: I mean, for me, like inclusion should be seen as, you know, a universal human right. It's unfortunate that in today's world, we have to talk about inclusivity like or how you are including each other. But it is very important and it's very pertinent. To me it really means embracing all people irrespective of race, gender, disability, medical or any other need. It's about giving equal access and opportunities and getting rid of discrimination and intolerance. And it really affects all aspects of public life. But I also think that achieving inclusivity requires effort, and you can't really say that we're being inclusive without addressing it directly. And I think this means, you know, putting in structures in place to make sure like to make an extra effort to make sure everyone is included. And for me, that stems from education. So, you know, like we all may think that we know everything we need to know about each other, but at the end of the day we're all so unique, we're all so diverse, especially at a school like McGill. So, it's important that everybody in their roles whether it's faculty or even the student is educated and, you know, knows what they need to know to make sure that each and every one of us feels included in our daily environments.

DERAH: Yeah, for sure.

HASSANATOU: Just to bounce off of that. I feel like this is where MASS in particular plays a role in helping to reconcile like differences with people who come from the African continent and don't necessarily feel like they fit into the term of, like a North American Black person. And at the end of the day, like Rele mentioned, we're not like a monolith. We come from various different backgrounds. And yeah, so inclusivity would mean not only accounting for those who identify proudly and daily as Black, but those who are perceived as Black students that don't necessarily identify within the social context of the school, they go to like McGill.

MEL: I mean listen, both of what they both said were fantastic. I think that's the whole point of this role. The BIPOC role was to reach out to students who regardless, it's like, ok, you identify as Black, but what is also other particular parts of your identity that are also important to you for us to also consider right? And as you were saying, Blackness is not a monolith, right? It's expansive. It's creative, and it's like Black people are so, in my opinion, at least, we are fantastic creative people, creatures who need to be in all facets of society. And I believe that when we are represented

in that way, it allows students, of course, and people to see themselves to feel confident in themselves and to feel that they are a part of the social fabric. And that is also important.

DERAH: Yeah, yeah. Thank you all for your responses. I think you gave excellent responses, and it's important for us to continue to actively talk about the concept of inclusivity and to work towards actually, you know, bettering our society to be more inclusive. I'd like to talk next about a topic that we all kind of, you know, always talk about these days, which is the pandemic. You know, we're still in the pandemic, but the past year, past year and a half has been, you know, pretty challenging for, you know, many, many different people. And I'm guessing it has also been challenging for student groups as well. So how have you been able to foster community, you know, in your in your groups, in your communities during the pandemic?

HASSANATOU: I would say that maintaining a social media presence has been super important. At the end of the day, everyone quarantined. The only access they have to the access to the outside world is through technology and through their phones. I feel like that was super important. And especially at school like McGill, where you don't necessarily see people like you every day, seeing them through a screen is super important to know that like, you're not alone and like, although we are a minority, there are others like that. And I also was referencing the fact that McGill, is an international, I would say international students' school, people come from all different kinds of places and like one way to mesh that from remote learning is through social media. And I think this past year, like despite the inconvenience and I guess the struggles of hosting events online or hosting programs online, like I've noticed a great eagerness from students and from people within the community to show up to the events and to participate and to get to know each other so they form their own like smaller things here and there. And yeah.

RELE: Yeah, like just to piggy-back off Hassa. I totally agree. I think social media is something that is so scrutinized in today's climate, but as all things are in life, there's good and bad sides to everything, and I think that making use of the good side of social media is like, really important. During the pandemic as BSN, we hosted a lot of online hangouts. Of course, these aren't ideal. It's kind of weird, you know, hang out with someone through a screen. But it was better than nothing and some other initiatives that weren't directly unrelated but were definitely Black related: I worked on some workshops called "Being Black at McGill" and at those workshops, because it began during a pandemic, that's when I really realized if we're going to return to inclusivity is that it's also about learning about yourself. So, one of the workshops was centered around, you know, unpacking your Blackness and it helped me realize that a lot of our struggles are centered around the fact that as Black students in a school that is so not Black, often we don't know who we ourselves, you know?

So, the pandemic, you know, everyone's at home just with themselves, it gives everyone a chance to really unpack their Blackness and their identity. And then now going back to a world where it's

opening up more, as BSN and we're almost on the edge of every single guideline that's restrictive. So, oh, we can now have ten people. We got ten people in the room, you know, like, we're just pushing and pushing it, and we're getting a great response from the community. Like, we have hosted a few events like Black Hoco, which was like just a Black party for all Black students. Great responses. Soul Food Friday, like everything we can do to open up the community again after the pandemic is really fostering more community. And yeah, it's been really fun. Also, things like collaborative playlists we're doing like on Spotify, so like weekly or biweekly, we have a new playlist with a theme like maybe old school, hip-hop and like everyone can just add to the playlist. So, like, it's the little things like that that I really think help foster community during and also after the pandemic.

MEL: I'm gonna, I think I'm good I think with this question there was because of the role, there wasn't as much outreach as I would have liked to be, but definitely with "Being Black at McGill", I was able to offer some support sessions after the actual workshops if people wanted to still unpack some feelings that came up because as Rele was saying there was such a richness in really understanding and delving a little deeper into what does Blackness mean for me? Um, and then afterwards, there definitely has been some partnerships throughout this position with the equity office our shared spaces, teaching and learning services, myself, Charlene Sutherland, Louis, Antoine and Nicole Mitchell, who works at the School of Social Work. We actually partnered to put together a "Dealing with Microaggressions in the Classroom" workshop. So, there's ways in which we're able to kind of bridge the gaps and reach out to students of color on campus to build a community, even if it's talking about something that might be unpleasant, but to find each other, find resources and hopefully connect with one another as well.

DERAH: Like we know, things are, things are kind of opening back up. So, we're having opportunities to do a lot more stuff in person. I remember the Black Hoco, I wasn't able to attend because I wasn't in town, but I did attend Soul Food Friday - I think it was last week or two weeks ago. So could you tell us a little bit about your, you know, your your events, such as the Hair Day and Soul Food Friday, and Hasa yours like the MASS Gala, for example.

RELE: I can start so, you know, we have a ton of events. BSN is really broad, like there's a ton of different portfolios, so we do have the more social events like Soul Food, actually it was Soul Food Thursday last week. Because you know, the room's, pandemic, it's hard to get rooms and Thursday was the best time we can get. But yeah, Soul Food Friday, Black Hoco, Hair Day. But in my role as president, I'm kind of trying to focus our events at a particular area, which is education. Last year I was the VP Education, so I wanted to be able to continue that work in my role as president.

And what we're aiming to do is kind of dispel the myths surrounding what you can and can't do as a Black student. So, one of the things we do is called a Youth Day where we invite youth from various, Black youth, from various schools in Montreal, CEGEPs and high schools. And we kind

of tell them like, hey, like, you can come to McGill, you know, like, this is what you need to do, this is what it's like and actually guide them through it. It's one thing to get into a school like McGill, but it's another to come out with tangible, you know, work, not necessarily work but experience. So along with that, we hold panels like the Black Lawyers panel, which is happening on Thursday. Similarly, it's also created to dispel the myth that you can't be a Black lawyer at McGill or anywhere you want to go, but also just providing that guidance so that when you actually do get into law school or med school, wherever you want to go, you actually succeed because the system is not built for us to succeed. And so, events like that, again, volunteer and industry affairs, that's where I that's where we're really, really streamlining our passion as a group this year at BSN.

HASSANATOU: On MASS' end we also hold a range of events, I would say in the past two months, we've hosted an event every week, which has been really nice and it just kind of targeted different like aspects of our like membership. So, our Halloween event, for example, was like a storytelling. We had like a little cute like food thing and like, it was really nice. Just have everyone in one room and just kind of share a childhood like experiences. We have our own "Dance and Discussion" that just went by as well. It was a dance workshop. Two of our execs who dance like lowkey, put together choreography and like, taught it to like the people who attended and that was really nice too. And I still remember the dance moves. I think so, like things like that are, like, super helpful. I would say our larger events are the ASC, which is "Africa Speaks Conference" and the Gala. So "Africa Speaks Conference" every year it's a different theme, different topic that's brought to the table. And we have multiple different panels, and we have speakers and experts within the field come and talk based on the subject. And then the Gala is really just, I would say, like the main event of the year, not to dismiss the other events. But we really all just gather, see some shows, watch performances. It's an opportunity for students to get involved, to see what talents and skills there are within the McGill community and Montreal. It also gives us the opportunity to work with outside organizations, outside schools and just exposes a lot of our talents that you find within our membership at this event.

DERAH: Mel because you have kind of like a, I would say, more maybe more experience like the entire McGill, you know, landscape. Hopefully maybe I can start with you on this question. How do you think that safer spaces can be ensured for, communities like this at McGill?

MEL: Great question. I think that's still an ongoing conversation and will continue to be an ongoing conversation. Definitely, you know, my time working with the Anti-Black Racism Working Group, there was a space in a building that we were looking into for not only to for staff, to of course be present, but also a lounge so therefore students who identified as Black who come and they could find books they can maybe speak with the Black student affairs liaison, other individuals who worked work with the plan or are attached to the plan as well. And that could be a space where they could see other students who are just like them hopefully connect with other students, regardless of the faculties across faculty connections, and just be in a space where again,

it's it doesn't feel like they're walking in somewhere and then they're getting looks. Or they may not feel very comfortable because somatically Black people could feel that in our bodies. When you walk in a space and you're like, ok, I don't think I need to be here or people don't want me here, you feel that right? And absolutely, I'm really hoping that the space will continue to grow. But that is a least one area. And then I would think that with the MASS and BSN, absolutely they offer the safe space for students. Like Black students already know where to come or where to go to or to seek once they come on campus. So, there are some starting points. And then I think those starting points could grow out later on. And therefore, once people feel comfortable, they can. Ok, how can I move and navigate on campus as a whole? Right. So that's where I would start with that question.

DERAH: Great. Do you have any other things to add?

HASSANATOU: Um, well, I would say that the Black student space has been a nice first step. It has been a slow first step. So, it would be nice to get it going and have students like actually in and out of there and like you mentioned, like MASS and BSN being safe spaces where students can go to. I would say that there is um, in terms of like making it known that we exist. I will say that there isn't necessarily great visibility in that sense and that it's definitely something to work on. Um, other spaces or safer spaces like campus in general, I would say seeing more like Black admin Black professors, Black people teaching. Teaching in the African Studies department too would be nice know because for the most part, you walk into a classroom and a lot of those classes, you'll see that there are Black people that are African people who are sitting in those classes. And then it's taught by like a white European who doesn't necessarily like the certain facts about the history that people dispute against, and it feels safer, I would say just use the word again to have that taught to you by someone who looks like you to have your own history taught to you by someone who looks like you?

DERAH: Yeah. I think that's I think it's, you know, extremely valid. Um, it would be nice to have someone teach something that they have experienced already versus, you know, someone that may have not experienced something like that. But yes, that's an amazing point. Rele, do you have anything to add to that?

RELE: Um, yeah. Just to add to both Mel and Hassa's points, I think a safe space is really about creating a culture of trust. Um, I feel like the most necessary thing for people to feel they can be themselves and open up. And like as Black students at McGill. It can be so tasking and emotionally exhausting, trying to keep your guard up all the time or trying to mask your Blackness. So, I do feel like the Black student space is a step in the right direction, but again, it hasn't been initiated as smoothly as we would have liked. But I mean, it's all about progress. You know, baby steps, it's a step in the right direction, which is again going to foster trust within the community. And also, to add to Hassa's this point about the education. Not only would it be nice to have you know, Black

profs teaching these courses, but also to make these courses more accessible to students who are not necessarily in Poli Sci, or Arts. As a science student I've really wanted to take some of these classes, but I have been so afraid because I've never read a book in my life, it feels like. So, when they tell me I have to read a reading like once a week, it's not that accessible. So, looking for ways to include a larger variety of students from different faculties and different educational backgrounds I think will also be a huge step in the right direction.

MEL: Do you mind if I just could add on?

DERAH: Sure. Yeah, sure. Go ahead.

MEL: The term the culture trust is so important because it's one thing to have or to build a culture of trust, let's say among individuals identify as Black. But there's another thing to also build a culture of trust within the whole institution. Right? So therefore, when I came here to McGill, I know that when I came here, I was in, and I was out right like I did not stay on campus to study. I went to another campus to study. Like, there's something about being able to move around in the campus in which you're studying and spending the majority of your time. And that also means that faculty and staff and admin who do not identify as Black also need to understand how they can create safer spaces for students who are Black, indigenous, other students of color. Right. It needs to be much more expansive view than just maybe having the Black students in the Black community here at McGill kind of holding that accountability.

DERAH: Yeah, yeah. So yeah, I think that's an excellent point as well. It kind of brings me to my next question. But before then, so is what you're seeing like more people outside the Black student body need to help out in like creating safer spaces as well versus only us or only Black students creating safer spaces.

MEL: I think that's a part of it. I think that, you know, when we definitely have discussions around microaggressions, students are coming to us and discussing the ways in which maybe in a class, maybe seeing someone who's an admin or what have you, maybe not might not be using the right language or might make a comment that, of course, sticks with you a little bit longer than it needs to. And absolutely, that means that, you know, we all have implicit biases, but we need to be very open about what those implicit biases are. Right? I may be a mental health professional and in the mental health profession, there's a lot of implicit biases and you need to understand when you're meeting individuals and you're hearing their lived experiences in their life story. How is that making you feel somatically? Are you feeling comfortable about discussing race and culture? Or maybe even within the Black community? There's a whole bunch of other layers that are also within our community. Are you comfortable and open discussing those things? So there needs to be a little bit of commitment and work on the part of many individuals to create a safer space?

DERAH: Yeah, for sure.

RELE: Can I actually add to that further. Thank you for that great point because I actually mentioned earlier about education. You know, let's educate these people so they know like not to see that thing in that way or not to do a certain thing. But even beyond that, like we're human beings, people are not everyone is going to educate themselves. So, it's likely that as a Black student or as a Black, as Black faculty, like there's a chance you might be offended or uncomfortable in such situations. That's why I think it's important to also create safe spaces for those people to speak about their experiences, because when you go through these things it is the worst when you're isolated and you have to, you know, deal with it internally because it always leads to something else, you know, it's like a domino effect. So, creating the spaces where Black students and Black faculty can go and speak about how they feel and unpack their experiences, I think is also a step in fostering safe spaces and again fostering trust within the community.

DERAH: I have a like a two-part question next and Hassa I'll start with you. Um, how do you think students can get involved and how do you think students who are also not part of, you know, the MASS community? How can they help like, you know, get involved and support your initiatives?

HASSANATOU: I would say attending events is super important. Putting yourself out there, I know it can seem scary to kind of be, to just show up and not really go with friends or anything like that. But I would say definitely like pushing yourself to go to events, keeping up to date with our social media. We put some work into it. The Instagram looks great. The website looks great. Easy to manage. I would say a great resource as well, mentioning the website. We actually have like a guide where you can see different things that you can be involved in, places to eat, places to get your hair done, transportation and things like that. I would also say signing up to our listserv just to throw it out there. We do have a weekly listserv where you can see all the different ways that you can get involved with MASS and what MASS is doing and events that are coming up and just different recommendations and tips for students. And in terms of people who don't necessarily. I want to say, belong to the group. I would say that MASS has always said and all of our events, we always have like a small disclosure: you do not have to be African to come to our events. We always have that. We've always highly promoted that. And this year we've seen a lot more, a lot more students who aren't necessarily African or Black show up to our event. And it's really nice because that way they get to see firsthand, like they get to get to see firsthand what our culture is about, they get to interact with us firsthand. We get to kind of, you know what I mean? They ask questions and we kind of help them like they learn from coming to events. So, I would say just involving yourself, like integrating yourself with different groups like events and programs is like one way of supporting that.

DERAH: Yeah, yeah. I think it's excellent. The fact that when you market event at MASS, you specifically say you don't have to be African or Black to attend these events because people who are not part of this community when they come, it speaks to what you said about building trust. So, when I say, let's say an African is an event and sees someone who doesn't identify as African or someone who is not Black, having a good time interacting, being jovial and being fun, it kind of builds that trust, you know, in that space. And can, you know, even sometimes open up the floor for conversations. And Rele for yourself as well, how can how can people outside the community and people also within the community help and support your initiatives?

RELE: I mean, of course, everything Hassa was totally correct about, you know, following our social media, following what we're doing, checking our website. We also have like barbershops, salons, restaurants, but differently I think that the community at McGill, especially the Black community, is very talented as individuals and as a ton of different skills and abilities that might be going hidden. So, I think that as Black students, we should, you know, be willing to follow our passions and like start new things based on what we can do, for example, one of our of the project managers in the social portfolio, he's a dancer, so he also is doing a dance and discussion type workshop. So, in general, like my dad always told me that in your twenties, you know, it's a time to like, really invest in yourself. Like, figure out what you're good at. So as BSN, I'm always welcome to people from outside or, you know, the rec community to follow their passions and start up things you. So, I think another way to get involved is in that sense, to give back to the community as well, you know, and try and start initiatives. Of course, we're all students. We're all busy. But if anyone, if ever anyone has the time or the passion to pursue something outside of their academic career, then BSN is a great place to start.

DERAH: Excellent. Excellent. And going forward, how do you want to see the work of your community, or your group evolve in the coming years? You may not be here, you know, three, four or five years from now. Depends on your plans, but you know, when you look back or when you come back to campus sometime or when you speak to executives from these groups, you know, how do you want to have to see the group evolve?

HASSANATOU: Um, I would say that I would definitely be coming back because I just I feel like I've always been involved in MASS like very heavily, uh, from my first year. And so, one thing that I would really like to see is more collaboration is one thing I would say both within like the Black student groups and with other organizations. Yeah. So recently we had like the Latin American club, reach out and they were like, yeah, we know our culture is like, uh, like basically rooted in like African cultures. Um, and like that was really nice of them to reach out and just kind of like merge those two together. So, I would say more collaboration in future. And then the same thing with like collaboration with other universities in Montréal, because a lot of the students here like they live, whether they whether or not they live, like close to McGill, they still interact with other students and other people within the city. So that's another thing. And I think so. That's all.

RELE: For me I'd say with BSN being, you know, first and foremost, a service to Black students. And with all of our emphasis, I mentioned being placed on education, et cetera. I think a direct measure of our success as a student, as a service is an increase in the numbers. So, numbers of Black students at McGill, numbers of Black staff, Black faculty, Black opportunities. It's not necessarily the easiest thing to attract, but because of the lack of demographics our school. But I still think that if you're making progress, you'll be able to see it, you know, from the eye test. So that's simply, as simple as that increasing Black enrollment at McGill that shows we're doing a great job of fostering community, creating safe spaces, you know, so that's just a direct number. Like if we're increasing the number of Black students, you definitely doing something right? You know, people feel comfortable coming McGill. They definitely know they have a path. So that's what I'd say is where we want to see our group evolve.

HASSANATOU: I just wanted to add, I would say, having more of a link to graduate students as well, because I feel like for the most part, it's a lot of undergrad students who do come to events and who do participate in MASS. And I, I would say as well BSN, it'd be nice to have like a more direct a closer relationship with graduate students. And so, they also feel like they can come to our events and they're not alone if they didn't do the undergrad at McGill. And on that same note with the Mac campus, I would say that the two campuses seem very distant. So just more seeing more reach being done on that campus as well.

MEL: I just I'm going to add them. This is where I think Myrlie, who's the new BIPOC LWA will be able to kind of bridge again those gaps and really make connections. Because while I was in the role, there was a lot of discussions with PGSS, with the Mac campus and different kind of organizations here to see what could be done. And I'm really, really thankful. I mean, Myrlie comes with an extensive background. We're both licensed clinical social workers. She just recently finished her psychotherapy degree, which I'm currently in right now, but she comes with a wealth of information around working with BIPOC individuals, LGBT plus individuals and wellness. And I do feel that that was definitely a part of the plan was to help bridge the gap again, make connections between undergrads and grad students. So therefore, there would be some kind of fluidity. So that's the hope.

RELE: Also, to add, actually, I think another measure of progress is increasing positions of having Black reps in different faculties. So, for example, I'm in pharmacology and in my class, I'm pretty sure I'm one of two Black students. I don't know how many that would be in that in the total program. But like, I should not be meeting someone for the first time. Last week, another Black student, "you're in pharmacology?" That should not be a thing after three years. So, I think that and we're starting to do this with clubs like the BVA, which is the Black Varsity Association, and we're trying to start a Black nursing like club. So, I think, like having Black reps in all different faculties is another step in the right direction that way again Black students in engineering there is

already one engineering with know here to go or like Black students in education like they should be reps or maybe even mini clubs in each faculty. I feel like that's also a good step in the right direction.

DERAH: Yeah, just to kind of go back to some of the points that all of you touched on, it was, you know, when you were speaking, I kind of sense that, you know, growth comes as a result of like more people in the organization kind of makes me think of, you know, a slogan or one of the, you know, basketball teams in NBA “strength in numbers”. So, like, like you said, like the more people there are to be a part of, the more people there are people who identify as Black or African, the more people that can be part of this group and the stronger the group, you know, the stronger the group becomes. So, like all of you, all of you touched on having more Black people, more Africans in the first place at McGill would lead to, you know, strengthening these organizations, strengthening Black and African identity on campus. And just to kind of wrap up what is what is something that you would like people to know about your group? And maybe Mel what would like people to know about your profession or what you do as well?

MEL: I think, you know, when we're looking at the mental health profession again, like you're really sitting down with an individual who no one is trusting you and wants to feel safe sharing with you parts of who they are, some of the struggles that they might have and you cannot separate that person's culture, race, religious background, whatever intersecting identity or identities they have, you cannot separate that from the person, right? When a Black student or a South Asian or an East Asian student is, you know, either in front of me or online, I'm not just looking at the mental health problem and not thinking of the context. Yeah, and not thinking of their background and how everything that they might have to navigate throughout this world might be actually adding to that mental health challenge. So, it's not necessarily the person who has a problem. It's some of the things that we have to deal with in the world that might be exacerbating whatever you know, again, challenge that they have. And we need more, absolutely more Black or BIPOC identified clinicians within the university and just within the city, right? There seems to be a smaller number, unfortunately. I was the first individual who is Black on the team here at the Student Wellness Hub for about two years. And then now, thankfully, there's three of us. But it shouldn't be just speckles of people. It should be a very diverse team, of course, and I know we're working towards that, thankfully. But I guess it is slow moving a little bit as well. So, as I'm moving outside of this role Myrlie will be able to come in and again, she has a wealth of knowledge. She has so much great expertise and I think she'll really be able to pinpoint some of the concerns around wellness that some Black students have, create the groups have people share and meet with one another. So, I'm really excited for what's to come.

DERAH: And Hassa, what is what is one thing you want people to know about your group?

HASSANATOU: I would say that everyone is welcome. I want to emphasize again, you don't have to be African to be part of MASS or to go to MASS events and to just overall get involved, like whether it be with exact positions or not. MASS is a very inclusive space. We welcome anyone who's eager to learn and to celebrate African cultures. Um yeah.

RELE: I'd say that again, BSN as a service. And one of our duties is to make sure that every Black student that comes through McGill can, you know, hit their heights of success and achieve what they came to do. So, like whether it's success like success has different streams that come from it. So, like if you need help, like mental health, come talk to us, we'll direct you the right person. If you need help connecting to a professor, whatever it is, just that BSN is committed to making sure that we all succeed as Black students. That's our first and foremost priority.

DERAH: Awesome. It's been a pleasure speaking to all of you and learning about your roles in your groups, and your group specifically. And you know, I look forward to seeing, you know, a lot more. I look forward to seeing a lot more progress within your groups. I look forward to seeing more events, of course, because I like events and I like attending your events. So, I look forward to all of those. And yeah, good luck with everything and.

MEL: Thank you for the invitation.

DERAH: My pleasure.

RELE and HASSANATOU: Thank you.