



Cultural Belonging & (Re)Connection Series: Detailed Summary

Dear GrubStreet Community,

We wanted to share more information about the planning process for the Cultural Belonging event series as well as more detail about the conversations that were had in November:

In June 2022, GrubStreet formed a Cultural Belonging Committee, made up of GrubStreet staff, board members, instructors, and community members. The committee met regularly over the span of 6 months to plan the November series. In addition, the committee hired GrubStreet instructors to facilitate the series as well as Beyond Binaries Consulting to run specialized facilitation training and to lead the events' large group discussions.

The format of each event included a welcome and organizational updates session with GrubStreet senior leadership staff, small breakout group conversations about belonging facilitated by instructors, a large group shareback led by Beyond Binaries, a musical performance, and a look forward to 2023.

Conversation prompts were emailed out in advance of the series to registered attendees. These prompts were:

#1: Within your experience at GrubStreet, write about a time when you felt:

- Inspired
- Nervous
- Curious

- Uncomfortable
- Proud
- Discouraged
- Seen
- Like you belonged
- Feel free to pick one or two words that resonate with you, or another emotion that comes to mind for you.

#2: What should belonging look like, sound like, feel like at GrubStreet?

- In our classrooms?
- In our events?
- In our community?

Outreach for the event series included:

- Email blasts to all GrubStreet email lists
- Committee members conducted individualized outreach
- Invitations to staff, instructors, BWOC members, and board members

Common Themes/Trends from the Discussions

Overall, session participants had experienced the full range of emotions that were included in the initial prompt (curious, uncomfortable, proud, discouraged, seen, like you belonged) during their time at GrubStreet. Many people shared about times they have felt uncomfortable or discouraged, especially in relationship to classroom dynamics. This included both interactions with other students (e.g. naming the fact that white students can take up a lot of space in conversations, students asking questions that express judgment rather than curiosity, or incidents of microaggressions and/or racism) as well as interactions with instructors.

Regarding instructors, participants pointed to both course structure, like the level of representation within a syllabus, and classroom management as moments that have contributed to a sense of not belonging. With classroom management, participants shared about moments when instructors did not facilitate shared air time well, did not address problematic comments in the moment, or did not exhibit curiosity to understand a student's work.

Participants also shared about many moments where they did feel proud, seen or like they belonged at GrubStreet. In several instances, these moments started with uncomfortable or difficult interactions, an ally addressing the situation, and the

individual ultimately feeling more connected to and included in the broader community. This is in large part due to the work many instructors have done to improve their teaching practices in the past few years. Participants have appreciated this work and are looking forward to its continued deepening and expansion for years to come.

Several participants shared experiences with the Muse and the Marketplace Conference, both in terms of its history of being an exclusive space and an opportunity for difficult interactions to spur moments of growth. While the Muse was specifically highlighted, participants noted that the challenges around creating an inclusive community extend from the classroom, to our events, to instructor training and engagement, to our staff and board composition and awareness of DEIB issues. We also want to recognize that the publishing industry has also been a historically white and exclusive space. As mentioned in our [cultural equity report](#), “GrubStreet’s organizational history has mirrored and perpetuated the cultural equity gap found in Boston’s arts sector and the publishing and writing world at large.” Community members want to see a consistent level of commitment to inclusivity and belonging across all aspects of GrubStreet.

We recognize that individuals who attended these sessions likely already feel connected to and invested in GrubStreet. Their range of experiences within the organization and their commitment to having conversations about how to increase a sense of belonging within the organization contributed to this first installment. We also recognize that we have a much broader community to reach, including those who have disengaged because of negative experiences, those who believe that this work is not for them, or simply those who already feel a sense of belonging. We are committed at GrubStreet to reach as many members of our community as possible as we continue our Cultural Belonging work.

We want to thank you for being a part of GrubStreet and for your commitment to creating a more welcoming and inclusive community. We look forward to continuing this ongoing work and creating more opportunities for us to gather together.