

# BSC \_ Season 1 \_ Episode 1 \_ Final

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## SPEAKERS

Dr. Thomas, Dr. Fowles

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- D** Dr. Thomas 00:01  
Black Social Capital Black Social Capital
  - D** Dr. Fowles 00:19  
This is the Black Social Capital Podcast, a show where we talk about issues that affect Black students, staff and faculty on college campuses, and other professional arenas. Our bi-weekly episodes will allow us to recognize new scholars, explore professional pathways, and pinpoint tangible steps to stay motivated and rise together. Welcome to the very first episode of our show. I'm Dr. Theo Fowles. And in this episode, you'll get to know us your co hosts will talk about our journeys, what Black Social Capital means and what you can expect from us moving forward. So let's introduce ourselves. And I'll let Dr. Jaqui Thomas kick us off.
  - D** Dr. Thomas 00:58  
So I am LA native and I want to give a shout out to all my alma mater's. I want to start off with Los Angeles Southwest College in South Central Los Angeles, UC Berkeley, of course in Berkeley, California, St. Mary's College of California in Moraga, California and California Lutheran University in Thousand Oaks, California. I also want to just let my listeners know or let our listeners know that my professional expertise lies in areas like

residential life and housing, academic advising and online student services as well as a little bit of online curriculum building. I am a co founder of the Ujamaa Investment Club. We've been going strong since 2016 and I am the current president. I am also the co chair of the Living Learning Communities Working Group, which is part of NASPA's Student Affairs Partnering with academic affairs knowledge community.

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Dr. Fowles 02:05

And I'm really excited that you're co hosting with me I think we've been thinking about project like this for a really long time. And one of the really big reasons that we know each other in the first place is that we're part of the same family, the same brotherhood sisterhood, we met because of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated, and Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Incorporated, shout out to your centennial year,

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Dr. Thomas 02:28

Z-Phi

D

Dr. Fowles 02:30

And so I'm really excited for the audience to get to know you because you're a person that is very detail oriented. And you can turn those details into action. And so I know that in all the projects that that we've worked on, you've taken something from start to finish with impeccable timing, and people really know how processes run and so on as folks get to know you, I know that they'll see some of that energy come out, especially as we bring on some of our fantastic guests. So moving into our questions for you today, I think one of the first things I wanted to ask you is, what was the topic of your research and how did you become interested in it?

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Dr. Thomas 03:20

So my passion in research is applying student development theory and showing evidence of student development outcomes. And I became interested in that through my doctoral research. So I looked at individuals in my doctoral research, I looked at individuals who completed their bachelor's degrees in fully online programs, and I asked them about the types of engagement opportunities that they had, and then I assessed for their development outcomes. And my findings were significant and I built a predictive model that explained which factors lead to student's overall development 40% of the time, which if you know anything about predictive models, that is a big deal statistically. So I was thoroughly excited to continue with the quantitative type work that I had done in my

doctoral work in my student affairs career



Dr. Fowles 04:19

what you said to me really just sounded like a spreadsheet. And so can you paint a picture for me? Tell me what you found in your research. And what you want people to do as a result of your findings. paint us that picture?



Dr. Thomas 04:34

Sure, sure, sure. So when I completed my dissertation, what I found is that there are some there are four really important areas when you're looking at engaging online students. First is the online learning environment. So your your software, how it's set up, your user interfaces, all of that. Then there is the learning community. Which is your classmates, your professors, and just others that go to the online college however you connect those individuals. Then there's your student support team. So those are your academic advisors, your student affairs professionals and your tech support professionals really important for online, college tech support professionals. And then also the social engagement opportunities, right? So you need newsletters, you need clubs, just because it's online doesn't mean that you don't need those things. So that's what I found in my work. And I hope that individuals who are trying to create engaging online experiences really do pay attention to all four of those areas, right and build those things out. In my work, though, I am kind of unfortunately consistently like building the case that student affairs professionals are experts, especially for residential life staff, because that's where I've been working for the last few years. And it really comes down to me just feeling like we really have so many things down to a science. And too often our housing partners in the, you know, the back office, or student affairs leadership or academic affairs partners really take our expertise for granted. And they make decisions without us that affect us that affect the students. So as an as an assessment professional, I prepare my leadership with facts and figures and recent trends so that they can advocate for our department.



Dr. Fowles 06:35

And data always matters, data



06:38

always matters, data always matters.

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Dr. Fowles 06:42

thank thank you for that. Um, one of the other things that that we have, as a part of this show is a segment called Community Capital. And in that segment, we really want to dig down deep into a professional's journey, how they got to where they are, and so on. One I know that you gave a shout out to your alma maters. So maybe you could include a little bit of about your educational journey, but also, you know where you're where you are now and how you got there.

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Dr. Thomas 07:14

Sure. So, um, my educational journey in terms of higher education started with at Los Angeles Southwest College, which I started attending while I was actually still in high school. I was really enamored with the idea that I could take college classes as a high school student and spent most of my time while I was in high school, at the college, so I ended up completing my associates degree before I even completed my high school diploma. And I was salutatorian when I graduated from my associates degree program, but I don't think I was actually I was like number six in high school, but that's okay. So then after that I transferred over Yeah, I transferred over slash just went ahead and matriculated to UC Berkeley, which was a huge deal for me and my family. And I was just very excited to get into the school of course, and the black community on that campus was just unparalleled. I learned so much from them. And I spent a lot of time just working with one of the student groups called the Black Recruitment and Retention Center, as well as the Bridges Multicultural Center. And basically what we were doing were as students trying to recruit underrepresented minoritized populations to UC Berkeley, as well as retain them once they got there. So that of course, blends in a little bit to my career path, right? Because that's where for a lot of people and I am no different. Become interested in student affairs and start to learn that there are people who graduate from college and still get to do that work. So, in terms of my educational path after completing my degree at UC Berkeley, I went to St. Mary's College of California in Moraga and that was such a wonderful experience. I got a degree in counseling there. I learned a lot about myself. I learned a lot about helping others. And after that, I started working as a online student advisor at an online college and was eventually promoted to be an Associate Director in the Student Services Department. So I was leading a team of online student advisors and I realized that I wanted to go ahead and get the doctorate. So I, I enrolled at California Lutheran University. Also an amazing experience, lovely staff and faculty. I really can't say too many, or just too many good things about the institutions that I attended. I'm very, very lucky to have had great experiences in both public and private school, right? And along the way, while I was completing my doctorate, I was realizing that I needed to get more student-facing experience, I just I really wanted to I worked at an online college for so long. I wanted to actually have that face to face interaction with students. So I went

over to housing, and I had a position that was very similar to an RD position. But I also had a lot of back office responsibilities as well. So that was a really good learning experience. And then from there, I landed my first Assistant Director job in residential life and I was able to oversee the development of living learning communities and other academic programming for the department. And I would say there was one. There was a moment where I decided that I had finished my doctorate. And I was really still interested in assessment and how I could do you know, doctor things with my doctorate, right? So I asked my director, Dr. Christine Bender at the time to allow me to go to an assessment Institute, and I wanted the department to pay for it and she said, Yes. And what she wanted me to do was bring back the information on how we could approach departmental assessment. And that was great experience because one, I got to be, you know, in a room with a bunch of assessment nerds like myself for several days. So that was awesome. And then, two, I created a presentation for my department as well as a bunch of like hands on activities for my department to really get them into assessing what we do. And what came of that was eventually I started doing it or doing that presentation for others in the division. So I started, you know, doing the presentation for directors of the cultural centers at the institution I was at and teaching them about how to approach assessment for their department and I just really fell into the assessment world and I just knew that I wanted to do assessment next. So I was able to land the job that I currently have at UC Berkeley and I'm just so, so happy in my current role. I'm responsible for departmental assessment, which I love doing. I oversee the development of the faculty in residence program which I had experience doing previously and enjoyed. And, you know, I sit in a lot of the high-level meetings in my department and some in my, you know, within my division to just provide context and kind of figure out where I'm where the assessment for my department needs to go. So, that's my journey. I'm really happy about where I am right now. And definitely it felt like I was zigzagging all over the place for a while and I felt a lot of anxiety about not knowing what my end goal was. But ultimately, I have become comfortable with not knowing and just leaving my options open, and just just following my, my passions and figuring out what's next one step at a time is, is absolutely fine. That's me.

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Dr. Fowles 14:18

Thank you for sharing that. I really appreciate that. One thing that I did want to ask in terms of your journey, I know that we have lots of folks that may be listening that are entry level in their career, mid level career, and even folks with with lots of experience that are looking to make moves. But all of that comes with making some decisions. And so as we have more and more guests on the show, we want to highlight their expertise. And so I want to ask you, what was it? Was it one particular thing that made you decide to go get that doctorate. Well, what was it in your mind or around you that said, Hey, I want to go

and get this this next level degree?

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Dr. Thomas 15:12

That's a really good question. For me, there were a few factors. One, I had spent my entire academic career at public schools starting from right public education in pre K, all the way through graduating with my bachelor's at UC Berkeley. And then I enrolled in a private school for my master's degree. And that was a game changer for me. I just super appreciated the way that the faculty would come in, or the staff would come into our classes and say, hey, you're going to need this thing in two years. So I'm going to give it to you now. I'll give it to you again later. But I just want you to know that this is a document that you're going to need to look at and I don't want you to feel like you have to scramble. And after that happened maybe two or three times, I was just really blown away. I understand why big institutions and public institutions like UC Berkeley aren't able to do that, you know, high touch anticipation of needs. And I appreciate my experience at Berkeley for what it was, it was awesome. But that that private school experience was just great. So when I finished my master's degree, I definitely just had a feeling like I wasn't done, I was capable of a little bit more. And there was a little bit of a rush on my end to be completely honest, I left out that I was a Gate's Scholar, right? That's one of the stipulations of gates is that you have to go straight through so when I felt like I wasn't done, and I knew that I was gonna lose that scholarship. If I didn't keep going. I went ahead and just just enrolled found just such a perfect match for me for my doctoral program.

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Dr. Fowles 17:03

Perfect, perfect, perfect. So, we all want to know these are important questions right? If we're talking about Black Social Capital and creating network, these are the questions that Black people want to know. First question of course, is sugar grits or cheese grits.

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Dr. Thomas 17:23

Team sugar grits all day. Aye my family's from the South.

D

Dr. Fowles 17:29

All right, all right. All right. I guess we'll give you one point for that.

D Dr. Thomas 17:33  
Yes. All the points.

D Dr. Fowles 17:36  
ebook or paperback? audio book. And would you prefer a night in or night out?

D Dr. Thomas 17:44  
Oh, team introvert. I'm staying in the house. But we can video chat.

D Dr. Fowles 17:50  
Alright, last question before we take a little bit of a break. What does Black Social Capital mean to you?

D Dr. Thomas 17:57  
Black Social Capital is Investing in ourselves for ourselves. It's it's doing things for us and by us. And it also to me, means that we take full advantage of the knowledge of the work arounds have the histories of both our living elders and our ancestors, right? So that means we need to know our history. That means we need to understand, you know, our future of where our world our city, our state, our government, you know is going and, and just really work together to apply to apply our, you know, the greatness in the black community.

D Dr. Fowles 18:53  
I totally agree. We're gonna take a quick break and we'll be back right after this. Zora Neale Hurston said those that don't got it can't show it. Those that got it can't hide it.

D Dr. Thomas 19:10  
Show that you got it with the merge we have in the Black Social Capital store. We've got statement tees, totes and even a journal. I like to rock my scholar practitioner tee with a blazer visit our store at [staymotivatedandrisetogether.com/shop](http://staymotivatedandrisetogether.com/shop). Alright everybody, welcome back. So I'm going to start off this segment I'm with how I know Dr. Fowles and why I'm excited that he is the co-host of this podcast. So Dr. Theo is my fraternity brother. Shout out to Phi Beta Sigma. And eventually we just became really close and part of the

same friend group. We have just a dope dynamic friend group and we have, you know, been having so much fun all of these years and eventually, right as you heard my story, I enrolled in a doctoral program shortly after, you know, our friend group got started. And we became study buddies because he also enrolled in a doctoral program. And pretty much we were each other's support system. I think I wrote almost all of my dissertation on your kitchen table. And now we're business partners, thank goodness it's about time and I think that's probably why I'm most excited about being a co host with Theo is because I know that he has been wanting to do something like this for a very long time. He is uber talented and outgoing. I'm pretty much my exact opposite because I am ingoing right? But he's super outgoing and he loves people and people love him right back and I understand why. But also, I just think that there are very few people I have met that love black advancement as much as Theo so I think if you know, when I think about the title of something called, you know, Black Social Capital Podcast, I really can't think of a better person to be, you know, taking up that cause and walking in that walk. All right, you tell the people about yourself.

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Dr. Fowles 21:34

Well, first off, I'm again, I'm really excited to co host the show. A little bit about me. I was born in New York, the New York area raised in the Chicago area and found my way to the West coast. Ultimately, I found out that cold weather isn't the greatest thing. So at 17 you know, as I was graduating from High School. I had some big dreams growing up in the Chicagoland area. I knew that most of my my friend group, were going to be staying in Illinois. They're going to go to some great schools there. But I feel like the last couple of years of high school my junior and senior year, I really I really found a passion for telling stories, and particularly telling stories through film, so I would spend hot Chicago summers in my cool basement, and I would sit there and I would watch movies, and I would watch all all types of movies, I would walk to the library. Come back with a bunch of VHS tapes. I'm showing my age. Come back with a bunch of VHS tapes and then DVDs and and I would be able to guess the ending right at the beginning of the movie and so my uncle or aunt that that raised me said, Hey, there might be something to that. We used to live in California and there's a school that has a really good film program called USC. I had never heard of it. But I knew that my uncle and aunt couldn't afford it once they shared a little bit about it. And, and it became my goal to to cross the Rockies and go to this, this number one film school that I keep hearing about and so over the summer, I applied to schools made that happen and got the biggest acceptance letter that my eyes could stand by getting accepted at USC film school and so USC was great. It was a an amazing an eye opening place. When I I stepped on foot when I stepped foot on campus. You know, my eyes were open to things like Black people ride skateboards, they don't do that. What is boba? I've never heard of this. And so there was a lot that I just didn't know. And



that was really exciting for me. And so I made connections. My favorite place on campus was the Black resource center on campus. It's where I met a lot of my friend group and really connected with people and made my way through through the university. But I did graduate from SC with a degree in film, and I thought I was going to make my way through the silver screen and make movies but I was impatient. So going into my senior year of college, I found out that I also liked taking people from not knowing to knowing things. I had volunteered at different schools, during after school programs, things like that, and I ended up applying to Teach for America. And through that program I was able to teach in the Bronx, New York, I taught high school English and ESL. And I put my own little spin on that on that class. I taught film studies as well. And so students from from across the globe, you know, students that were newly immigrated to the US from, from Puerto Rico, from Honduras, from Haiti, from Vietnam, we're all in my classroom. And the one thing that everybody could understand was, was stories that I could play on film, and we learned new vocabulary that way we had props through film and so that was the first spark that I had in thinking about the combination of a way film and education might meet. And so that's really been a passion that has been a through line through my entire career. It's it's traversed multiple industries. And so I went from teaching in the classroom to working with mentoring organizations like Big Brothers, Big Sisters of Greater Los Angeles, I came back to campus at USC, and was working at the center that used to support me, became the assessed Assistant Director for the Black Resource Center, right on campus. And I'm currently back in the nonprofit sector, working to empower and support first generation college students, connecting them to internships, as well as a network of mentors. And so, just a little bit about me. Again, it always boils down to being able to help people share their stories. Because that's what I fell in love with in my basement.

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Dr. Thomas 27:04

We're gonna move into some intellectual capital. So again, because this podcast is new, I'm going to remind everyone our intellectual capital segment is a discussion with a scholar about their research, or about maybe a current event that they have really intimate knowledge of. Today I'm going to ask Dr. Fowles about the topic of his research and how he became interested in it.

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Dr. Fowles 27:34

Yeah, I'm really excited to share actually, because it's really relevant given a lot of what's going on in our world today. My research took a look at how foster care alumni, so folks that experienced the foster care system, how foster care alumni use social media to navigate higher education and the reason I actually became interested in the topic of

foster care alumni using social media and, and we, the community of higher ed is that, again, all my worlds were converging. And so at the time that I started my doctoral program, I was working for an organization whose mission was to empower current foster youth and in advocating for not only their peers, but also policy change. So we would work with students throughout the state of California and share how we could potentially affect policy change. And so within that organization, I was the Social Media Director and so I really took a interest in things like the accessibility of, of internet of mobile devices of social media for my end user, which was at the time, former foster youth. And so in looking at the the world of higher ed, I also knew that foster care alumni have abismal. There's there's abismal data as it relates to the success of foster youth. You know, half of half of those that experience the foster care system, don't graduate from high school, not 11% of those students go on to get an initial degree, from a four year institution and even less go on to to higher roles and so on. For me, I wanted to figure out what were the stories? Again, I go back to my initial passion, what were the stories of some students that were succeeding? Right, and what were some commonalities. And so what I found is that there are three areas that that students could tap into, in order to help them create this network and build capital while they were in school. And the first was information, how they were gathering information using digital tools. The second was whether or not there was communication, right? whether whether the communication was a two way street, between not only their peers, but also their support services. And lastly, was action right? How could they really mobilize the information that they were receiving to really impact their overall experience? And so I've taken those kind of three buckets and expanded on those, those findings by implementing services and, and strategies with other organizations, you know, first, right back in the, in the Resource Center, where I was working in the Black resource center on campus, and then even now, I'm in the organization I am in now, really tapping into making sure people are aware of these three buckets of success.

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Dr. Thomas 31:32

And, you know, I think I want to go back to something you said that I think is super interesting because I found something similar in my research. So you said that, you know, there were students who didn't even have access to begin with and it may have been because there was no internet where they were, or it could have been because they didn't have the money to afford the internet if it was available, or they didn't have the devices or couldn't afford the devices, right? And I think that talking about the digital divide when we, you know, talk about Black Social Capital is really important. I definitely read a lot about that when I was doing my lit review for my dissertation. So I just wanted to draw that little connection and maybe we'll maybe we'll talk about that in another episode.

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Dr. Fowles 32:23

It's super important, especially as the world becomes flatter as people are becoming more and more dependent on video calls and and, you know, right now I can think of three or four ways that people might be able to video each other. But do we have access to all of those those points of of communication? Right. So I think that yes, we should definitely get into that. In the next another episode. Sure.

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Dr. Thomas 32:58

All right. I'll make a note. But in meantime, I want to move to a little community capital. So again, to our listeners, know that we will have a community capital segment, just about each show, where we will talk to a professional about their, their journey, and how their education you know, was able to assist them in that in that journey, so, and also how other people can assist them in that journey and so on. There will be so much in the community capital segment. So I wanted to ask Dr. Fowles. Can you describe your current role and responsibilities? And tell us tell us what's fulfilling about it?

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Dr. Fowles 33:44

Yeah, so, uh, in my current role, I am the California Program Director for a nonprofit. Again, as I mentioned, that focuses on empowering first generation college students, connecting them to mentors as well as creating a pipeline to internships and so my, my role is really to as I like to share and go back to share the story of these students share their stories of the mentors that are supporting them. And use those stories to do a couple of things. I use the stories to fundraise to make sure that that the program can be funded to make sure that our fellows receive stipends for amazing milestones within the program. But I also make sure that the community partners that that that we work with are supported as well. And so my job is often to go go out, shake hands, meet people and and bring them back to our organization as a way to build social capital for our students. So, our program in any given workshop or any given program, the purpose is to introduce these students to individuals opportunities and experiences that they may not be able to access on their own. Right. So whether that's learning about the unwritten rules of the workplace, right? What are some things that that we all know about our jobs, but that aren't that aren't said explicitly, right. And so being really direct with students and sharing, yes, your identity as a first generation college student is one part of your identity. But also, let's talk about some of those social identities as well. We all know that this world is run by isms and so on. Part of my role is to share some stories around how to navigate those isms, drawing from my work in cultural centers drawn from my work in classroom as well, right? My students have have imposter syndrome that they've been holding on to since since high school, right? And so how do we let that go? In order to succeed in a bigger

classroom, like college? How do I help a student that is transitioning from the community college level to the four year university and so my job and role is to create an environment where, where those transitions can happen, and where that support can happen. So I find it really fulfilling. Because at the end of the day, I'm seeing that transformation I'm taking someone from, again, not knowing to knowing something about a topic, not knowing to knowing something about themselves. And that happens not only for our fellows within the program, but also for our volunteers, our, our, our coaches, our mentors that end up supporting these amazing students. So I really enjoy the fact that I get to combine again, all of my previous experience into this one role and that that's challenging because there's always something that that pops up that I didn't expect. So that always keeps me on my toes. But I always like a little bit of improv.



Dr. Thomas 37:31

Yes, we know you like improv. The listeners are gonna find out, too



37:38

hey, you know



Dr. Thomas 37:42

Okay, Dr. Fowles, now's your turn. Tell us what Black Social Capital means to you.



Dr. Fowles 37:47

I think Black Social Capital. In it's essence, it is the idea of community the idea of striving for your dreams and your goals but in a collective way. I think that we always can go further. And when we work together, we always just need a little bit of knowledge, a little bit of resource. And I think the greatest resource that that there ever has been, is the resource of people. I think that's one of the things I learned in school was that it's not always what you know, right? On this show, we're gonna have doctors and lawyers and people that are business owners, people that that have degrees and and some that have no degrees. And it's all about not what they know, but also who they know. And so I think with with the show, with this podcast, I'm I'm really excited that we're able to expand the number of people that others know. So my my definition is expanding that network for the the betterment of not only ourselves but the community at large.

- D** Dr. Thomas 39:12  
All right, so I made my own list of important questions to ask you since you ambushed me with some important questions. So we're gonna do some this or that.
- D** Dr. Fowles 39:25  
Alright, let's go.
- D** Dr. Thomas 39:27  
Alright, so neat or messy?
- D** Dr. Fowles 39:31  
Uh, I like I like my mess. If my desk is messy, that means I'm coming up with some great ideas. I love whiteboards. I love like, scraps of paper. I love like, doodling and making stuff. So definitely messy.
- D** Dr. Thomas 39:54  
All right. Really important question, mac and cheese or yams?
- D** Dr. Fowles 40:01  
I mean, both of these things are like depends on who made them here, right? Is it like the three cheese? Is it the five cheese? Like what type of noodles did you use and your mac and cheese right? Are the yams like crispy? Right? On top right? Did you did you do all that? But I think three out of five times I'll probably choose mac and cheese but I do tend to have a little bit of a sweet tooth so if I'm feeling it that kind of day, I'll go for the yams. So So yeah, let's go mac and cheese for the win.
- D** Dr. Thomas 40:43  
All right. laptop or mobile?
- D** Dr. Fowles 40:47  
I'm laptop. Most days laptop most most days. Yeah, I like to be. I like to be mobile. But then like, again My messiness in my brain and on my desktop, my I tend to work with the

dual screens and all of that. So yes, a laptop all the way. Plus, I feel like every time I use my mobile device, my fingers seem fatter. So my auto, auto correct isn't always the best.

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Dr. Thomas 41:22

Right? We are going to move into our next segment super excited about this one. It is called we see you. So one of our favorite parts of this show is going to be this segment. It is our opportunity to shine a light on those who do amazing work. And for our first episode, we want to make sure that we shout out some folks that helped us get to this point.

D

Dr. Fowles 41:48

Exactly, exactly, exactly. And so Black Social Capital started as a group chat, and soon morphed into a pilot series of interviews that we did together called Smart Digital Workshops. So, from from those initial interviews, we had some amazing conversations and we wanted to give a shout out to some of those initial interviewees. So, Dr. Eden Agonifer. Miss Kendra Archer, Dr. Tierney Bates, Dr. Juliana Calhoun, Dr. Rosalind Connerly, Dr. Airies Davis and Dr. Katherine Wilson, all amazing individuals, and the list goes on.

D

Dr. Thomas 42:29

Yes, the list does go on. I'm going to shout out Dr. Alan Green, Dr. Sharoni Little, Dr. Kemi Mustapha, Dr. Toutoule Ntoya, Dr. Lissa Ramirez-Stapleton and Dr. Tamica Smith Jones. Thanks so much to all of you for helping us get our start. So we also want to shout out Keviette Minor who designed the Black Social Capital podcast logo, and Thurston McGill who creates all the original music for the show.

D

Dr. Fowles 42:59

And if you want to recommend someone on the show. Be sure to visit [BlackSocialCapital.com](https://BlackSocialCapital.com)

D

Dr. Thomas 43:05

With that episode one is on the books. As we close out we'll leave with a final thought. August Wilson said, have a belief in yourself that is bigger than anyone's disbelief. All right, everybody, we're out. Black Social Capital.



Dr. Fowles 43:26

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