

# Speaker Bios

**Kia Darling-Hammond, PhD**, is director of education programs and research at The National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC). She has more than twenty-five years' experience as a leader, researcher, teacher, thought partner, and mentor in education and education-adjacent spaces. Dr. Darling-Hammond's scholarship explores thriving, and what makes it possible, for Black LGBTQ+ and same-gender-loving people.

**Danyelle Williams** is a current graduate student of Stephen F. Austin University pursuing her Master degree in social work. She currently works at LoneStar College- North Harris as a Transfer Advisor, aiding students in transferring to local universities. She has a passion advocating for those who can't speak for themselves, particularly in mental health pertaining to domestic violence.

## Episode 2, **Mentorship in Higher Education**

### **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

mentor, people, relationship, danielle, important, person, mentorship, opportunities, guess, talking, interested, field, question, cultivating, bit, research, work, mentee, class, network

### **SPEAKERS**

Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond, Dannie, Danyelle, Jay

#### **Dannie 00:11**

Hi everyone. Welcome to another episode of Speak On It. I'm Dannie, one of your co-hosts and today I'm joined by my co-host Jay Wang and two very amazing guests, Danyelle and Kia. So I'll go ahead and let them introduce themselves.

#### **Danyelle 00:26**

Hello everyone. My name is Danyelle. I am currently in grad school for social work, and I'm a member of the board.

#### **Jay 00:36**

Hi everyone, my name is Jay and I am currently doing like a DIY post-bacc and I am currently a board member as well on the Youth Advisory Board for The Steve Fund, as a sidebar.

#### **Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 00:54**

Hi everyone, I'm Kia Darling-Hammond. I have a doctorate in Developmental and Psychological Sciences and I study thriving, especially thriving amongst people who society pushes to the margins.

**dannie** 01:08

And I guess I didn't introduce myself, but I'm Dannie, and I'm taking a gap year between high school and college. Well, now it's summer. So I'll be part of Harvard's Class of 2024. And I'm very excited. So awesome. So today, we're gonna be talking about mentorship in higher education. And we have a few different questions that we came up with during our pre-chat that everyone gave their thoughts on. So this is the first one: What is a mentor?

**Jay** 01:37

So I guess, like the basic basis for a mentor, are, you know, like someone you can look up to for advice, whether it's in a more professional setting that's geared towards your career ambitions, or maybe just how they go about the world and navigate through it. So yeah, there's that portion. Another is there can be someone who's like an official mentor or someone who is like an unofficial mentor. Whereas like an official mentor, someone who may have that like mentorship stamp, either through your school, your program, or maybe you, yourself, and that individual kind of establish that and be like, "Hey, like, would you be willing to mentor me in X, Y and Z?" And that's how you go about getting that. Whereas, like, an unofficial mentor would be more, you know, like gravitating towards each other. There's kind of that like, unspoken bond with one another that if you're helping each other go through certain things, and I don't know, like, for me, personally, I have fun with both, but I think with that unofficial mentor thing, it's kind of like, "Oh my gosh, like, a little bit like besties like we're reading each other's minds and like helping each other through things." But that's also dependent on your situation and how you prefer handling those relationships.

**Danyelle** 03:05

Yeah, so I definitely agree with what Jay said. To me, of course, a mentor is going to be, I guess, in the most literal sense, somebody that has walked down the path that you picture yourself walking. So for example, since I'm going for social work, I would look for somebody that has already kind of worked in the field that I want to get interested in. So that's what I'm looking for, you know, kind of like a mentor who's already established, but as Jay mentioned, of course, this can come in the form of like, students or you know, your peers, so those are also a certain type of mentor that you get that kind of actually walk the walk with you as you're going through your journey and everything like that.

**Jay** 04:00

So I guess the next question, by extension, is like, how exactly do you go about finding a mentor?

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond** 04:12

I can start us off. I think, as you mentioned, there are different kinds of mentorship. So sometimes there are mentorships that you fall into. For example, I've had people reach out to me and ask if they can participate in a project that I'm working on. I've had people simply end up in conversation. And that's evolved into a relationship where we're exchanging information, staying in touch and that sort of thing. And there are times where you can actually pursue a mentor more formally. Sometimes there's a program in an organization, like a university or an institution, an office where you work. And sometimes you can actually identify a person who you think you'd benefit from learning from and approach them in a particular way, and ask them if they'd be willing to take you on as someone that they would give advice and counsel to. And there are lots of different ways to do that.

**Danyelle** 05:09

Yes, so I agree. I think teachers make a good-- for people who are just starting out and like undergrad and things like that, of course -- teachers have a lot of experience in the field. So they're a great resource. Joining different organizations that have people you know, that have certain interests, that's a great one, even your classmates just being in class you'll, you know, gravitate to certain people. So you form those bonds through just being in class.

**Jay** 05:41

Yeah, and I kind of want to piggyback on what you mentioned, Danyelle, about like your peers and your classmates that can help with that. For me personally, there are occasions where I get anxious reaching out to professors or people with like, fancy degrees or certifications just because I think there's that like intimidation factor. And at times, I have found it easy to kind of go through like an open window or open door through like my peers, because they typically like peers that are like a year or two older than I am because they've been through the path a little bit. So they're like, oh, like, you should go ahead and reach out to this professor, or you should go ahead and take this class if you're interested in doing X, Y and Z. And through those systems, I can kind of branch out a little more with other classmates, or, as both y'all were mentioning, reach out to like offices or like professors who may have those connections that my peers went through as well.

**Danyelle** 06:44

Yes, I 100% agree. I remember when I started my undergrad, and of course, you know, we're talking about research and things like that. And we had someone who was in the next class over and they're like, "Oh, if you're interested in research, like you want to talk to this professor, like he loves working with grad students, and he loves publishing. That's his bread and butter." So just through talking-- through another classmate, you know, you kind of find that connection like, "Okay, if I really want to publish, like this would be the teacher or the professor that I would talk to you." So yeah, I agree 100%

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond** 07:17

I'd say that there's some interesting pieces to that, too. One is, Danyelle, you would have had to have demonstrated that you were receptive to, you know, getting that kind of insider knowledge and guidance, and whoever that person was, who gave you that wonderful information is also an important part of the mentoring ecosystem, right, that person who's sort of generous with their knowledge, which might be any of us under any circumstances. I think it's really nice when you just end up in a place where people have a helping disposition, and can help you get connected to resources. And then of course, it's so important to take the time to think about what you might need. This is in alignment with my research, really prioritize following your passions, you know the things that really move you, and don't be afraid to ask people to help you think about how to make those a reality, because that's how you'll find out who these people are who are doing these things, that are in alignment with what you really like to do or need to learn in order to advance.

**Jay** 08:22

And I think on the flip side, there's also the conversation that needs to happen of what happens if you find someone. For example, like Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond, I'm like, "Oh my gosh, I love your research.

I would love to be able to jump on a project, or do something with me like please, please, please.” I'm like, do you have any availability? And then suddenly, Dr. Kia is like, “Unfortunately, no.” Right? So how do we navigate those situations as well, where you find someone who you believe is like your dream person and you're like, “This is what I want to get into.” They're at the top of their research field or whatnot, but then they don't have availability? How do students navigate that?

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond** 09:10

That's such a great question. I think one thing that's really important to understand is that there will be disappointments along the way as you pursue your journey, you know, your living work. And it's okay. And so that it's important to take “no” for an answer, you know, in a respectful way, and know that maybe it's not the right time, or it's not the right fit, maybe just because of time. You can ask people if they might be more receptive to a request later. You know, “Could we keep in touch?” You can try to find another way to engage in work with them. So, for example, hopefully as you're going into any university setting, you've done a little bit of pre-work to think about who's there and what they think about, what they study, and whether or not they might be someone you want to work with. You might be able to find another way to work with that person on a project later, or to be in their lab, that kind of thing in that kind of context. It might be possible to get a warm introduction to that person. So if you cold called someone you admire, and they didn't really give you the time of day, maybe that's simply because they really don't know who you are. You may know somebody-- LinkedIn is great for this --you may know somebody who knows them and might be able to give you a little bit of a better entry point into a relationship with them. But I think it's also important to understand that, you know, you can't force this thing and it's better not to. You want someone to show up to the relationship with you with willingness and energy and engagement and joy, right? So that it's a great experience. Maybe there are times where you need for somebody to just give you resources and information and it doesn't have to be joyful, but I think that would be thankless for everybody. So, sometimes, it's better to simply say, “Okay, thank you.” Or you could even ask, you know, “Really so interested in working with you because of your expertise in X, Y, and Z or your experience with this, can you recommend somebody else who might be a good mentor for me who you admire?” I mean, so there are a lot of ways for you to be creative about continuing to move forward in your own growth.

**Jay** 11:21

Yeah, and I kind of want to piggyback on that, from an experience with one of my best friends. She's currently just now became a PhD candidate within the past month. So, we're all super excited for her. But during her journey when she was kind of like finding a PI or researcher to be able to do her studies with, she, herself, actually had like a set checklist of what she was looking for, for a mentor because she knew what nourished her and what really helped her through her situations. And she knew she was very focused on her mental health because she knew there would be occasions where she needs to have a PI that understood like I need to take a break every now and then. It's not because I'm being lazy; it's not because of x, y and z. It's just because there are times when I get overwhelmed, and my mental health makes it so that I'm unable to function right now and I need you to understand, that as opposed to like someone who's like, “Why aren't you doing anything, work-work-work,” and then like draining her more. And I think through this process, she definitely had-- she had a lot of PI's that were interested of course, and she was interested in their research, but after like further talking with them and kind of having like a one-on-one meeting, discussing like, you know, like work styles and

communication styles-- which I as a side note, I think is really important if you're trying to establish mentorship-- she was like, "Oh, like maybe this isn't working with me." And then finally, she found someone who-- I have. She's been in the research field for a hot minute, since we were undergrad together, and have never seen her this relaxed, this happy and this excited about her research and having a mentor that actually like encourages her with all her various like amazing ideas and projects, but I'm like so excited and happy for her. Right? And I feel like that's also a really important thing when you're looking or finding a mentor is like someone who is willing to like, like, see you as a person and see all the struggles that you may deal with, and like work through those with you. that's.

**Dannie** 13:33

I like that you mentioned that Jay, someone who kind of sees you or believes in you and I guess, to use a colloquial language to who vibes with you, who I guess has a similar life path, I guess. Dr. Kia, you were saying something about like, sometimes the timing just isn't right. So I guess maybe keeping that channel open, if maybe you might be able to connect further on down the road. But I think for the time being, it's good to try to find people who are also willing to mentor you because like you might be really excited and willing to be mentored by them. But if they didn't have that capacity right now, or they just, it is not in their interest, then I guess not forcing it makes a lot of sense. So that way, you can end up I guess, like thriving by working with someone who wants to work with you. So I think that's a big thing. And then the other thing I wanted to say was finding mentors through other people. I think if a few of you mentioned that to like, maybe a fellow student or an upperclassman and you know them really well, and they can connect you with someone that they know. Because it's also like a personal/social thing too. So like they know you and they might know who's a good fit for you if you're new on campus or something like that.

**Jay** 14:43

Yeah, the good fit part of it, I think, is super important as well, because again, like the prestige and like amazing research that maybe like a PhD or PI is doing maybe something they're like, yes, like, I don't want to do that. But then I think like speaking with some people, I think we're going back to like the communication-style work-style environment. Like if you talk to your peers, and they're like, "Oh yeah, like this PI prefers doing X, Y, and Z and you're like, "I don't necessarily flourish in that type of situation." Maybe it's one of those things where you're like, "Oh, like I can check in occasionally. But like, I don't know if I want to..." Like you, as a student, would primarily want to work with that PI, necessarily. Or maybe someone who's in network that does similar research that may like, as you were saying Dannie, vibe better with you will probably be a better situation.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond** 15:38

And so PI is principal investigator, which is usually the title of a person who runs a research project and is the principal, meaning the first person researching or investigating the questions that you've chosen to explore. I just wanted to do that because some folks may not know the terminology. Danyelle, did you want to add something?

**Danyelle** 15:58

I'm just gonna to say that, I think-- because of course we're talking about all different types of relationships, but of course in a mentorship, even in a professional sense. Just to also remember that

there's different types, like some you may be able to talk to more like on a, you know, as you're saying like the vibing level, right? Some, you may just be like, "Okay, this is just the person that I go to for research. This is like the person I'm going to if I need to get that portion done," you know, so there's different types, even in like the more set arenas that you'll have different types of mentor ships throughout. So it's also important to know when you're looking for, you know, a specific type of mentorship as well.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond** 16:45

And if I could add something, different relationships will have different value. And sometimes the value of a relationship is not necessarily that it makes you feel warm and fuzzy, It's that you've learned something that's really going to help you in your life. And some of the learning might actually be a little bit unpleasant sometimes. So it's really interesting when you're in environments, formal work environments, university environments, since a lot of us are sort of academically embedded, there are going to be really valuable learning experiences that may not be wrapped up in silk, you know, and marshmallows. And it will, it will really serve you if the way that you move through these spaces is sort of with an attitude of appreciation for what you can learn, and a real clarity around the value and the purpose of these different kinds of relationships, to echo what Danyelle's saying, that each person may not be able to be everything to you, but each person has something of value that you can take away from an exchange with them, even if what's of value is you've learned something important about what you don't want, need ,or like. It's a really interesting piece of navigating relationships.

**Danyelle** 18:06

Yeah, even going back to the email, if you email somebody before, ask them to be your mentor, and they say, "Oh, I'm busy" or not, that's even a point where you can ask, as you mentioned, Kia, "Do you have any other people that I maybe can reach out to? Do you have any resources that maybe I should look into since I'm interested in this field?" So even if you can't gain that mentorship, you can still gain resources to look into and things like that.

**Jay** 18:37

I guess that kind of, what you were mentioning Danyelle, like, kind of goes into our next question, which is like, how do you further cultivate the bonds? After you do the initial like, code, emails, cold email, sorry, annunciation. Or like the warm hands-on stuff, like maybe having, like a friend might introduce you to someone. How do you go about strengthening that bond? If it's something you want to pursue?

**Danyelle** 19:06

So, generally, with me, and uh, we've touched on this before, so if I get, you know, a name or somebody that I think I'm interested in, possibly working with, of course, I will research what they've done. Of course, in the academic sense, I will pull up their CV and see what they've done, what they've published, things like that just to make sure that it's like a field that I want to get into and whenever I reach out to that person, then I'm knowledgeable about the field and what they've been working on and things like that to kind of create like a commonality, I guess. Just not like, "Oh, I found your name and I'm emailing you," but like, "I'm really interested and I have a desire to work in this field. Like I've seen, you've been working on this." So that's kind of how I approached the initial contact. And then from there, it kind of depends on, you know, the flow that you get back. But from there you kind of just, you

know, keep it going slowly but surely. But again, it's kind of kind of hard to say because it's, you know, it's forming a relationship, but that's the initial path that I kind of take to get there.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 20:18**

If I can add to that one more definitional thing, a CV is a curriculum vitae. It's essentially a summary of a person's work experience. And it's a term that's used very frequently in academia. It's a lot like an elaborated resume. That's for our listeners. You can tell I was an English teacher. So I think, in addition to what Danyelle said, and that approach is brilliant, I think, in terms of cultivating a relationship with a mentor, one thing that I know we've heard before in pre-chats are things like just making sure that you check in regularly with somebody. People can get really busy in their lives, but I think people really care to know whether or not you've been able to use the advice that they've given you, what came out of that. Always there's the opportunity to show appreciation, or simply to touch base. It's important to show up when the opportunities present themselves if you can. I have a lot of people in my life actually who sort of have an ethic of "I just show up" and they get these weird opportunities that just kind of come out of nowhere. Oftentimes, because they just went somewhere, they were invited to go and then their network suddenly expanded in a really powerful way, where they were visible to people who were looking to see how serious they were. So there's something about showing up and being reliable, being your word and having integrity in the way that you do the work. And really making good on it. Right? You know, we can have tons of relationships that are not substantive. But if you're really going to pursue engaging someone and ask for their time, and energy, and care, it's really important that that actually is in the service of what you're trying to do. If it's not, it's actually respectful also to then respectfully end the relationship, right? So there's a really important piece that you're managing and managing up, right? Making sure that you're communicating, making sure that you're being-- having integrity and honesty in the relationship and making sure that you let people know that they've helped you.

**Jay 22:32**

So just as like a follow up question Kia, what do you mean by like, show up? I guess, like, to further expand on that.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 22:43**

Absolutely. So Dannie, you're about to experience this. There are going to be tons of opportunities to go to events, to be at talks, to do office hours. Obviously, you want to be in class. That's really, really important. But that visibility that-- being visible, being seen, and taking advantage of opportunities becomes a part of how people understand how you move in the world. And then there's going to be strange things like right now, it's really great because everything's on Zoom. I know it's a terrible circumstance. But I've been able to go to and attend more events that I wouldn't have been able to go to because I couldn't have afforded to travel and so on and so forth. But let's say you are working with a mentor and they do have a particular conference where they present. AERA is a big one for educators. The American Educational Research Association has this huge annual conference. Going to a conference, participating in sessions that your mentor is presenting in or running, sort of showing that there is really meaningful interest in cultivating knowledge in that field. That's a way to show up and take advantage of an opportunity that's a little bit above and beyond, right. It's not a meeting. It's not a coffee chat. It's really being present to the opportunity to learn. And then... I was talking about my

friend, she goes to this one event, she meets a person, that person mentions another opportunity. She goes to that opportunity. Somebody then goes, “Oh, I hear you know about immigration. Why don't you be on this panel?” She goes to that panel, and suddenly it opens up all of these opportunities for work. If you had tried to predict the trajectory of those opportunities, you would never have been able to do it because they touched in different areas of her life-work realm, but because she kept saying yes to opportunities to be in these spaces with these people, a lot of things surfaced, some of which she had to say no to, but the opportunities were abundant.

**Jay 24:55**

I kind of want to expand on the content, like what you were just explaining with your friend who was suddenly exposed to a wide network of opportunities. With the concept of showing up is like, I know for those of us who may be living with like social anxiety, like it can be really difficult situation of like being open all the time and being open to like communications, because I definitely feel that at times when I'm like communicating with people who are more experts in the field that I'm interested in, or because like, you know, there's some situations of like imposter syndrome or you know, like, I don't, I don't want to, like pester this individual by consistently asking, but something that you've mentioned in our pre-chat before Kia, is like, this is your life, this is your education, and at times, like you gotta take the reins, and you gotta you got to show that you're willing to like, take advantage or be able to like, be in that position to continue learning and cultivating not only like other people, but you need to also be willing to cultivate yourself. And so for those situations, I know that like it takes me a little bit to like, breathe at times. I'm like I need I need like five minutes in like a corner by myself to like, breathe, gather up courage and then when I'm ready, I go out there and I like put out this like extrovert Jay where I'm like, “Hi! Nice to meet you!” Blah blah blah blah blah, like, “Oh my gosh, that's really cool you do X, Y and Z. I've done work with this I know this person, like, do you happen to know any interconnection?” and like really opening yourself up to like the possibilities out there. Not only like if it's like immediately related to like what you're interested in, but sometimes, even if like something seems to be a little left field for you, like that can garner some like network or capital for you as well, because I personally believe that like everything's like pretty interconnected and interdisciplinary. So like, even if it's like left field, there's some way that you can probably connect to it with your own personal connections or help someone or peer get connected with that as well.

**Danyelle 26:59**

So in the collegiate sense, I know, there's always events on campus for networking, things like that. So, whenever I first went to undergrad, I was not the person to just like walk up and be like, “Hey, I want to work with you,” like, you know. So I, of course, attended these networking events, you know, where you talk to professionals. And so that kind of helped me get a little bit better at it. Doing that, so I wouldn't be as nervous. I'm still nervous when I go to approach someone new, but it kind of helped with that anxiety as well. Even if it's like, I don't want to say something that you're not interested in. But let's say left field, like Jay said, you may go to an event where it's like left field, but you get that experience of talking to people. And so that also helped, as a side note.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 27:56**

I love that. I think that's brilliant advice. And it's um, it's appropriate to treat these interactions the way you would treat a job interview. And most of us prepare. Or to prepare what's known as an elevator

pitch, you know; it's not a bad idea to do a little bit of pre-work, especially if you know that you grapple with anxiety; ...just so that you have a script, or you have some notes, or you have some, some sense of what to expect, because anxiety often comes on when you feel fear about the unknown, fear of the unexpected, or something going wrong. So, doing a little preparation is not a bad idea. And it sounds like, you know, as we talked about network, and we acknowledge that there are lots of different kinds of relationships, you could also sort of ask a few folks about how to prepare or what to expect from within that environment. So Danyelle's talking about networking events. Those are great places to get the scoop on other things, you know, that you might be interested in on campus, whether they're academic, professional, personal, social, whatever.

**Dannie** 29:03

I think this connects back to our episode, "Getting Out of Your Shell and Finding Your Home Away from Home at College". And we talked a little bit about vulnerability and Brene Brown and like her research and her talks about vulnerability, and I-- this connects to actually a psychology course I took online a while ago. We kind of tend to miscalculate like how badly failure is going to affect us, too. So like, we think it's better to just not take risks, then we won't feel like we're going outside of our comfort zone. But um, she did some research and I guess people who feel like they're getting certain benefits or living full lives, or I guess thriving, to use another teams tend to take more risks, or they feel supported enough to take those risks. And they're able to go through what they want instead of kind of second guessing themselves, which can happen when when you're not in that space when you're kind of feeling like you can be vulnerable. So I think just realizing that it is a vulnerable thing to go up and ask someone to be your mentor or to connect or network at all. Like these things are vulnerable and I think you have-- preparing yourself to do certain things to get what you want and to, I guess, move forward.

**Jay** 30:07

And, and just to like, expand on the like cultivation bond to actually, like further on along the road of like, how do you keep and maintain these relationships in the long run? And I know that we touched upon, you know, like contacting or like demonstrating and reaching back out that like, "Oh, like I was able to utilize, you know, some of the advice and tips and things that we've talked about in previous conversations." But I guess, to like further expand on that for later on down the road to continue those relationships. I know that, Danyelle, during our pre-chat, you were sharing how you kept up some of your mentor [relationships]. So like, would you mind kind of sharing or expanding on that?

**Danyelle** 30:54

Yeah, of course. Um, so I think the first thing to note is that it's important that in a mentor relationship, it's not just, I know, we normally think that the mentor is supposed to like, be the only one that's giving in that type of relationship. So it's important to recognize that that's not true. Like, you don't want to just go into mentor, mentorship, and have the person like, keep pouring into you, and you're not giving anything back. So it's important, you know, to be active in the mentorship, not just have them trying to help you and you're not actively, you know, trying to engage and things like that. But as far as the example, I gave the example of a teacher that I met in undergrad. I took two courses with her and then after the second course, you know, I went up to her and approached her, and was like, you know, "I noticed that you were working in this field that I really am interested in and I want to gain more knowledge on that." And so of course, throughout the years, you know, I kept in contact with her, I

would update her, “Hey, I found this article,” or, you know, she knew I was interested in this field, so she would send me something and be like, “Okay, this may be of interest to you.” Or I would update her. you know, as my life progressed, as I graduated, as I applied for grad school, you know, she would send me information like, “Oh, this may even be an organization that you want to volunteer at,” things like that. So throughout the year, like our relationship has changed, because of course, you know, as I've progressed, so has she, so you know, she went on to be Dean, and now she's over the School of Behavioral Science. So, I think it's just important to know that the relationships change, but of course, you have to work to cultivate them. So you have to stay in contact, you know, not just like, “Oh, I need help,” or “I need this,” or “I need that,” you know, like, nobody wants to keep constantly giving and giving, you know. So it's important, like, “Oh, I found this article,” or, “Oh, this is so interesting to me.” Have you ever looked into this and you know, just like that, you know, make it sure it's a relationship and not just somebody constantly giving. Yeah, that's my experience.

**Jay 33:16**

here needs to be a little give and take, like it can't be consistently the person that's like taking-taking-taking because that only drains the person, I guess like mentally, but like it can extend it like emotionally sometimes where it's like consistently like okay, like, oh, Kia wants to say something.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 33:48**

Well, if I could say there are sometimes very transactional relationships and that's okay. It is important to really, to the greatest extent possible, be clear about what it is that you're cultivating to exchange because you can have a mentor who's very focused on imparting knowledge sort of more like an apprentice would receive, who doesn't really need the touchy-feely stuff. But there are people who really, really do and that will be more motivated because they feel seen, and appreciated, and thought of. So I just want to articulate that you can have a range of connections.

**Danyelle 34:26**

Correct. 100% agree. I think I was just trying to showcase even in those like transactions, where it's like, oh, they impart like, “Oh, this is an important study, like read this.” This is something you know, like, the person has to be receptive to that. And, you know, like, even saying, “Oh, I read the article. It was so interesting. I learned X, Y, Z,” like even that is a little bit of you giving back to the mentor versus like somebody where it's like, “Oh, I need a reference,” or “Oh, can you refer me to this person?” You know, where you're always asking for something versus like, you know, taking what they give you and actually using it and reading it and thinking about it and using it to further you forward as well.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 35:14**

Absolutely. People want to know that the time they've spent or invested is time well spent and well invested. Absolutely, yeah.

**Jay 35:25**

Oh, um, I guess like just like piggyback or like continued Dannie's question on like, how do you-- how can you as like a mentee contributed to the relationship, like what Danyelle was saying. But I guess also from your, your experience, I guess like Kia as like a mentor, like, like what are things that you see

from like, your mentees like so you're like, yes, like that's, that's why like, I love doing this. This is why I love like talking with like, people, and sharing information and experiences and yada-yada.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 36:04**

Yeah, well honestly, I have to say again, Danyelle, everything that Danyelle said, is spot on. Right? Those are all things that are great. If I say, "Hey, read this article, it'll really help you" and you come back and you say, "I read the article, can we talk about it?" I'm gonna be so excited, you know, "Oh my gosh!" I think there are a lot of different ways to approach mentorship, I tend to approach mentorship from kind of an auntie perspective, right? So I like, want to know how you're doing, want to hear about your life. I tend to invest in the whole person. And those are the relationships that I make a lot of time for. And so that can show up as you know, "I'm going to help you get your dissertation written," "I'm going to help you navigate your graduate school experience," "I'm going to help you get into college," all those things. But I tend to be drawn to people with whom I feel a real connection. And those tend to be relationships that are lifelong relationships. So I love it when people come to me and say "Do you have a minute, I really need help with something?" My answer is almost always going to be, "Yes. What's going on?" Because for me, what generates that motivation and joy is being able to help. I think different people have different ways that they're trying to show up to these kinds of relationships. And really, everything that has already been said, is in the toolkit, like we should almost make a list of things that Danyelle said, you know, follow up, show up, you know, manage up, you know, let people know that you've appreciated what they've done for you. Be proactive about communicating the impact that they've had on your life. Understand that the relationship may shift and change and that their availability may shift and change, but that doesn't change the fact that you can go ahead and reach out and engage. I think all of those things are right there. But I think yeah, my biggest thing is if you need help, ask for it. Don't fear-- if somebody has made an investment in you and a commitment to you, let them show up to you. Because if you come to them in crisis, we're always going to wonder why you didn't ask sooner. And more often than not, when that happens with my people that I work with, it's because they were afraid to impose. No, I've made a commitment to support you. Impose.

**Jay 38:29**

So, in terms of that last point, because like I know that I definitely, like go through that to where I'm like, I really hope I'm not imposing and like putting too much and I know that we've talked about how there are different types of mentors. So I guess like for those situations, how do you navigate this, like navigate those relationships, like maybe as we were saying, like, if it's like a strict like mentor that's kind of like approaching in like an apprenticeship kind of situation like--

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 39:00**

But then you treat that like it's a professional exchange. If you were an employee in an organization struggling with something, your manager or managers would actually need to know so that they could intervene before it became a crisis. So always I think it's important to-- you want to develop the capacity to check in with yourself, pay attention to your stress, go, "Okay, what's happening right now? I need help. I'm going to be brave and ask for help. Where is the help that I need?" And then to really ask for it. Say "I'm struggling," even though it's really hard to say that sometimes, you know. "I'm struggling with this one thing and I'm wondering if you can help me untangle/disentangle from it." And if you can't, can you recommend somebody who might be helpful for me, I'd really like to move forward, learn and move

beyond this,” you know, that kind of thing. So you just, it's really important to be proactively engaged in working to get your needs met, asking for help. And again, if you find that a person's not responsive, it's okay. You can reroute. Look elsewhere for that support and help but don't stall out if you can avoid it. Sometimes we do stall out, but if you can avoid it, keep putting energy into finding solutions.

**Danyelle 40:25**

Okay, I had a question or comment, I guess. Um, so I guess as far as, you know, the relationship-building, generally, whenever I'm approaching a mentor, someone like that, like, I tend to let them kind of, I guess, set the boundaries to a certain extent, like whether it's going to be more professional, or whether they're, you know, interested in like you mentioned Ms. Kia, the whole person, I guess, is that kind of where you go, that's where I tend to do I'm like, “Okay, well, let's see how much they actually want to know, whether it's, you know, just purely professional or academic or if they just want it, you know, more updates. So maybe you can speak a little bit on that.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond 41:13**

Yeah, I think that's great. I think it's perfectly reasonable to say “I'd really love to work with you is that of interest?” And if they say, “Sure,” you can say, “So, how do you like to work with mentees?” You know, so and you can even ask a series of, you know, maybe two or four questions about sort of styles that you to get a gauge of what would work for them. So I think it's okay to be proactive in that way as well. Certainly, at times, it works to have somebody sort of feed you energy, but this is also your relationship. You've approached this person and are seeking support, but you're also investing your time and energy and effort into this. And so you have a say, in the shape of this relationship, and it's worthwhile to articulate what your needs are, and with respect to that, at least to get clarity at the front end of what the relationship is likely to look like. And when you have an advisor in graduate school, you can ask them, you know, do you want to see early drafts of papers? Or do you want to see the finished draft? Are you a person I can come to if I'm having personal challenges? Or do you want me to simply, you know, communicate to you that I'm not available? You know, you get to gauge with people what their comfort zones are. And I actually think there's a lot to be said about doing that up front. That's it. Relationships and trust evolve over time. So it may be that at the early end, it is better to sort of step back, feel it out, get a sense. You've got flexibility, so you can, you know, let them sort of set the pace. And then as the relationship grows, and you get to know one another better, then maybe it's time to say, “Hey, I'm wondering if we could shift the way that we work together in this way,” or “Would you be comfortable with this?” That kind of thing. It's really important to be proactive and to again, this is your life, your education, your career, you are the primary actor, you get this one run, so you want to make it worthwhile.

**[Rose-Bud-Thorn Song]**

**Jay 44:03**

So I'll go ahead and go first. A rose this week is I have finished my exam, as of last night for my MCAT, which has been an on-and-off journey for the past three months. It got cancelled two times. I had to reschedule it. And anyway 6pm to midnight, done. My bud is that I have a couple projects that are coming up with an amazing person. And I actually have a call with them tomorrow. Wait, no, on Friday, not tomorrow, on Friday, to talk about some of them. And then a thorn is I start classes again tomorrow.

And it's not really like a huge thorn. It's just I have three classes starting tomorrow. And it's a little nerve wrecking just because I'm getting back into the academic scene, but it's also kind of exciting. So, that's me.

**Dannie** 45:22

So I can go next. So let's see a rose this week. There are a lot of cool things going on. I guess one thing with my music production class, there are three different collabs I'm a part of right now, because we wanted to make some tangible goals for the rest of our class. I think we have like five weeks left. So Elijah who's like our instructor, he was like, we're all gonna make tangible goals that we're going to try to reach by the end. So some people want to make songs or add lyrics to songs, or to finish something because I think people tend to start a lot of different projects or songs and not finish them. So we have a bunch of goals that we're working on together. So I'm excited for that. And then I don't know I always do thorn at the end. So I'm actually going to do it in the middle now. So a thorn in the middle would be, we had, I guess a vacation planned to go to South Carolina from a while ago. And then we realized that we didn't want to take that risk. So we ended up just not going. But a bud would be, I think, playing more tennis here and just spending more time outdoors with my family here and just continuing to do that. And then I think we'll be going to Vermont soon. So we'll have an opportunity to vacation.

**Danyelle** 46:28

So my rose is going to be: we got a new dog. And so I've been wanting one for a really, really long time. And so we only got one. (Dannie: What's your dog's name?) And so my mom named her precious, but I call her a Little Bit cuz she's like, really, really small. (Dannie: So cute.) And so I would say, my thorn and my bud are probably the same thing. I started school, my summer course. And so it's been a while. Or not a while, but you know, when you get out of school, you know, you kind of lose the Mojo. And so of course with COVID like you know, it's even more so because I've been inside so I haven't even been working. So you know, just getting back into the flow of school and everything like that, but then on the flip side, I'm really excited to be back in school because of course when you're out you miss it. So I'm really excited to start back courses and then you know, finish my first or my last year out.

**Dr. Kia Darling-Hammond** 47:36

That's so great. Um, I, you know, I've been able to participate in really wonderful conversations like this more than I was able to before this terrible pandemic, so that's kind of my rose right now. This has been a week full of chaos, but also all of these really wonderful opportunities to connect, learn from people hear things, just grow as a person. That's been beautiful. I think the thorn is probably also a bud. I've just moved into a new home. And it's also chaos, which is part of the reason my morning was out of control. I don't know where anything is. I have no routines left, and so I have to rebuild, but it's a wonderful opportunity to have a space that I can call my own, which I haven't had in about a year. And you know, I will adjust but it's a little hectic here. It's stressful, but it's good.

**Dannie** 48:42

Okay, well, thank you so much everyone for sharing and we'll see you on the next episode.