

An aerial photograph of Richmond, Virginia, showing the James River, a large bridge, a multi-lane highway interchange, and the city skyline in the background under a clear sky.

Stories of Belonging

American Belonging Symposium Pilot
Richmond, Virginia 9.26.25

Share more STORIES

We are a human experience insights company combining AI and stories to help companies, organizations and brands understand and create better experiences.

We do this through the SEEQ Platform.

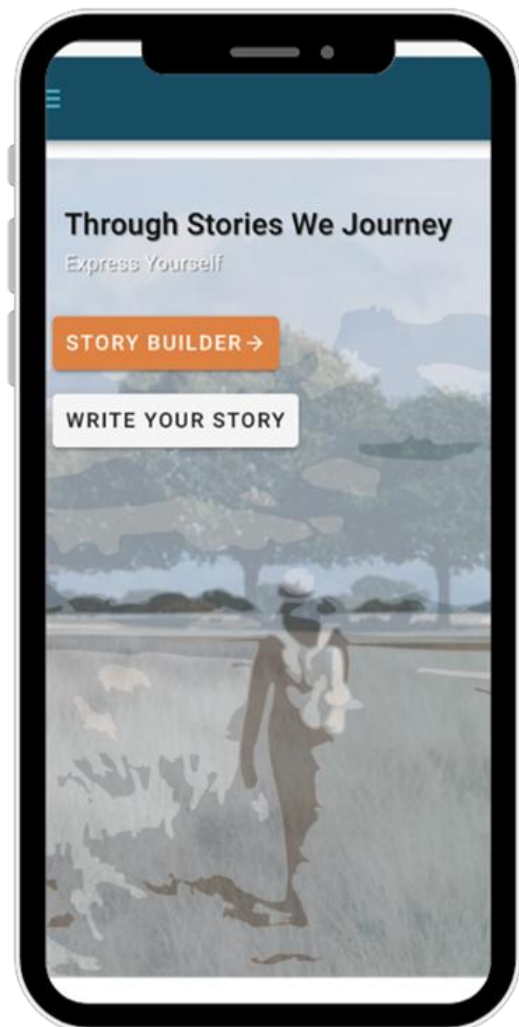
sharemorestories.com/seeq-overview



James Warren
Founder and CEO



Andy Sitison
Chief Technology Officer



SEEQ = Stories to Engage, Explore and Question

Empowers stakeholder voice; cathartic, empathetic experience for participants

Focused on WHY with scalable, quantifiable emotional insights through real stories

SEEQ Platform: Audio Reflection

share
more
stories

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American Belonging - A Story of Us



Share your American
Belonging story: what does it
mean to you to belong in
America?

**Our Stories Make
a Community Quilt:**

**Record your
3-5 Minute Reflection Here!**

Follow These Steps:

- Scan the QR Code
- Select "Audio" Story
- Choose a Reflection Prompt:

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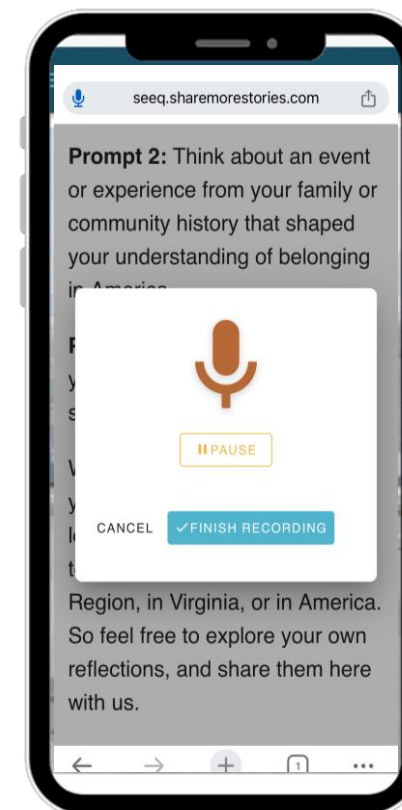
Prompt 2: Think about an event or experience from your family or community history that shaped your understanding of belonging in America.

Prompt 3: What's coming up for you today that you'd like to share?

- Record Your Story. *Pause if needed.*
- Opt in to Add Name and Submit!

Booth Partner:
PlanRVA
Where the region comes together to look ahead.

• Symposium 2025: Rising Together •



Share Your Belonging Story Today

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Write your story:

<https://seeq.sharemorestories.com/americanbelonging/>

Record your story (audio):

<https://seeq.sharemorestories.com/americanbelonging/reflections>

Need a little guidance? Simple instructions are here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_h4gulXI_bGcA_ikcs1dKybalHn8muZS/view

Learn more about American Belonging:

<https://sharemorestories.com/american-belonging/>

Where We've Been Today...

Context and Vision

Envisioning possibilities, thriving, and opportunity

Time Travel

Rediscovering the stories of our past to understand our present and future

What It Means To Thrive

Achievement
is possible for
every child and
adult.

Relationships
create
networks of
trust and
support.

Belonging is not
a dream but a
daily reality —
where every
person feels
valued, seen,
and connected.



Stories of Belonging

How do we experience it? What does it feel like it?
How can we design for it?

Fostering Belonging Together

Principles and actions that help us create systems,
places and experiences where we can all belong

**There is no
greater agony
than bearing an
untold story
inside of you.**

Dr. Maya Angelou



American Belonging: A Story Of Us

share
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stories

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Community-powered
storytelling initiative exploring
lived experiences of belonging
and connection

Engaging diverse voices to
reveal deep insights and inspire
collective transformation



American Belonging: A Story Of Us

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Where We Are Now

Personal and
Individual Belonging



How We Got Here

Family, Community,
History and Culture



Where We Can Go

What Our Future
Might Look Like

Desired Outcomes

Connect through our **stories of belonging**

Better understand **why belonging matters**, and how it is experienced

Begin to imagine **what belonging could mean for our Region** – through you

Table Top Connections

9.26.25

The 2025 Symposium | Share More Stories SEEQ

What do you hope to get out of this session?

Debrief





**Stories Are
Valuable
Because They
Are Human**



Stories Connect Us: To Ourselves, and to One Another

The background of the slide is a close-up photograph of two antique keys resting on a piece of aged, yellowed paper. The paper is covered in faint, handwritten cursive script in dark ink. The keys are made of dark, weathered metal. The key on the left is larger, with a simple circular bow and a long, straight shaft ending in a notched bit. The key on the right is smaller, with a more ornate, heart-shaped bow and a shorter shaft. The lighting is warm and directional, coming from the upper left, which casts soft shadows and highlights the textures of the metal and paper.

Stories Unlock Deeper, Human Understanding

A person's hand, covered in colorful paint, holds a magnifying glass. The lens is focused on a reddish-brown surface. The background is a vibrant, out-of-focus collage of colors including blue, red, yellow, and green. A teal rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing white text.

**Listen
Be Curious
Reflect
Share**

How To Listen



**LEADERSHIP
VULNERABILITY**

**HUMAN
CHANGE**

**LEADERSHIP
VULNERABILITY**

**HUMAN
CHANGE**



**COLLECTIVE
BELONGING**

**LEADERSHIP
VULNERABILITY**

Intention

Insight

Action

Impact

**COLLECTIVE
BELONGING**

What does it mean to you to belong in America?



Participants chose one of three “sub-prompts”

- Recent or present-day moment of belonging
- Family or community history shaping belonging
- Vision of belonging in 2035

Then they reflected on this additional questions:

- Key moments in the experience
- Remembering senses: hear / see / touch / taste / smell
- How the experience made them feel
- What they learned from the experience

What We Learned from Your Stories

Belonging is a lived experience of acceptance, identity, and resilience

It is sensory, heard in music and conversation, felt in shared spaces, remembered in food and family rituals.

There is a depth of empathy, struggle, and reflection expressed in the stories and confirmed by emotional data

Symposium Pilot Participation Overview

Participation	33 Stories → 77 Expressions
Participation Rate	15% (of Symposium Registrants)
Gender	76% Female
Race / Ethnicity	46% Black or African American · 39% White · 3% Asian · 3% Hispanic/Latino · 9% Other/Not listed/Not given
Age	9% 25-34 · 21% 35-44 · 36% 45-54 · 27% 55-64 · 3% 65+
Education	51% Master's · 21% Bachelor's · remainder professional/vocational/secondary
Occupations	46% Community Services · 12% Government · 9% Business · others Education, Science & Tech

- **Prompt Choice** – 58% shared a present-day belonging story; 15% chose family/community history; 12% envisioned 2035
- **Timing** – Over one-third described events **6+ years ago**, showing long-lasting impact
- **Topics** – Community 73%, Culture 58%, Family 55% — matching core themes of connection and heritage
- **Engagement** – 52% want community-involvement follow-up; 90% want the final report; 88% want updates
- **Life Context** – Two-thirds live with family; nearly half work mainly in an office, but stories span home, nonprofit, and hybrid work
- **Faith & Worldview** – 39% identify as spiritual, 24% as religious, with the rest humanist, agnostic, or not religious

Story Themes of Belonging

Shared Humanity

History Shapes Belonging

Visioning a Collective Future

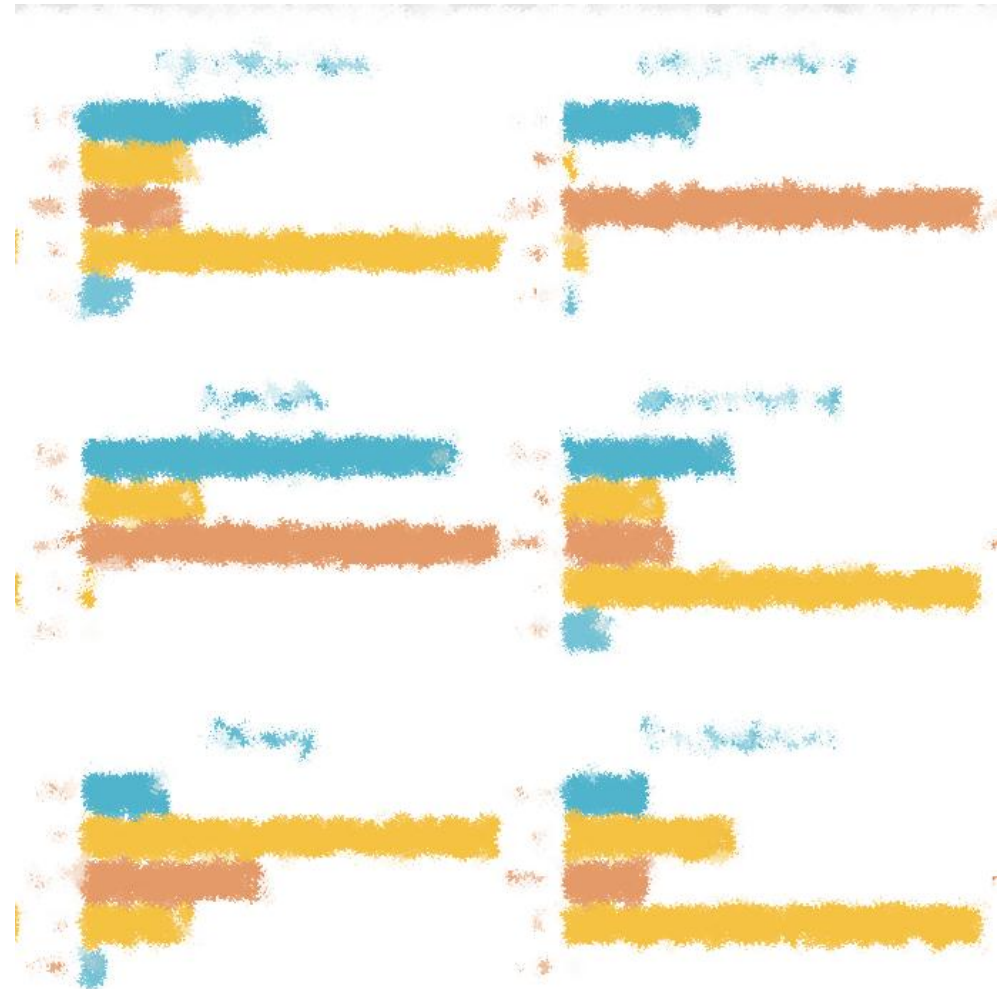
Resilience Through Adversity

Cultural Heritage as Strength

Belonging is Felt

How We Score Emotions

- Each story segment is analyzed across 54 distinct emotions.
- Every emotion is rated on a five-point scale (0–4):
 - 0 = very low
 - 1 = low
 - 2 = moderate
 - 3 = high
 - 4 = very high
- This creates a detailed matrix of emotional intensity for all 77 segments



What the stories show us

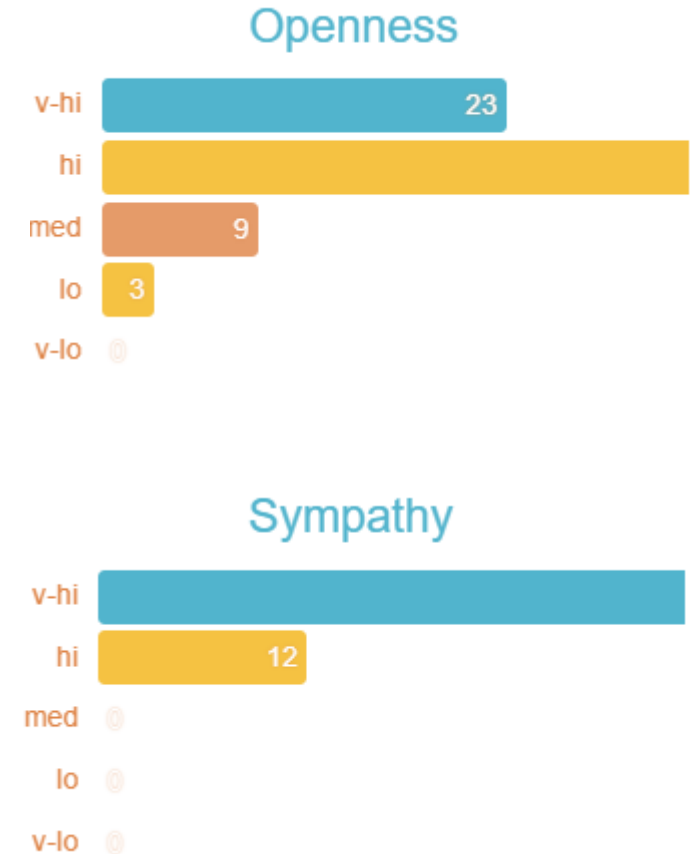
- Moments of empathy and recognition dissolve differences
- Belonging is forged when we truly see one another

Voices from participants

- *“This trip showed me how close we really are to one another, and that true belonging begins when we truly see each other clearly.”*

Emotional signals

- Sympathy 100 % High/Very High
- Openness 84 % High/Very High



What the stories show us

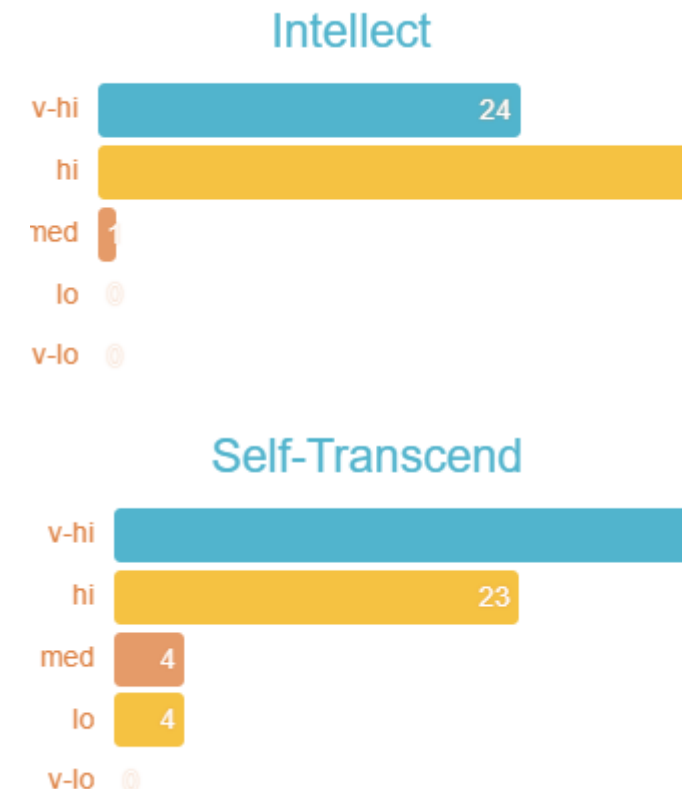
- Family and community histories ground identity and purpose
- Generational struggle also provides meaning and continuity

Voices from participants

- *“I learned early to work hard, know my worth, and carry forward the lessons of perseverance my family passed down”*

Emotional signals

- Intellect 98.7 % High/Very High
- Self-Transcendence 89.6 % High/Very High



What the stories show us

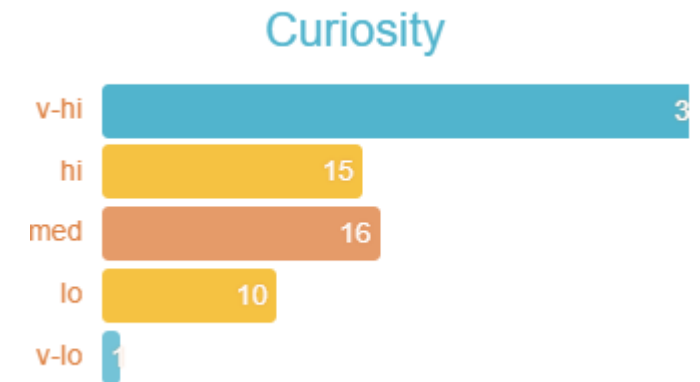
- Participants picture 2035 as inclusive and connected
- Community gatherings and shared identity define that vision

Voices from participants

- *“I imagine a future where every young person can live fully in who they are and know there is room for every part of their identity”*

Emotional signals

- Curiosity 65 % High/Very High
- Self-Transcendence 89.6 % High/Very High



What the stories show us

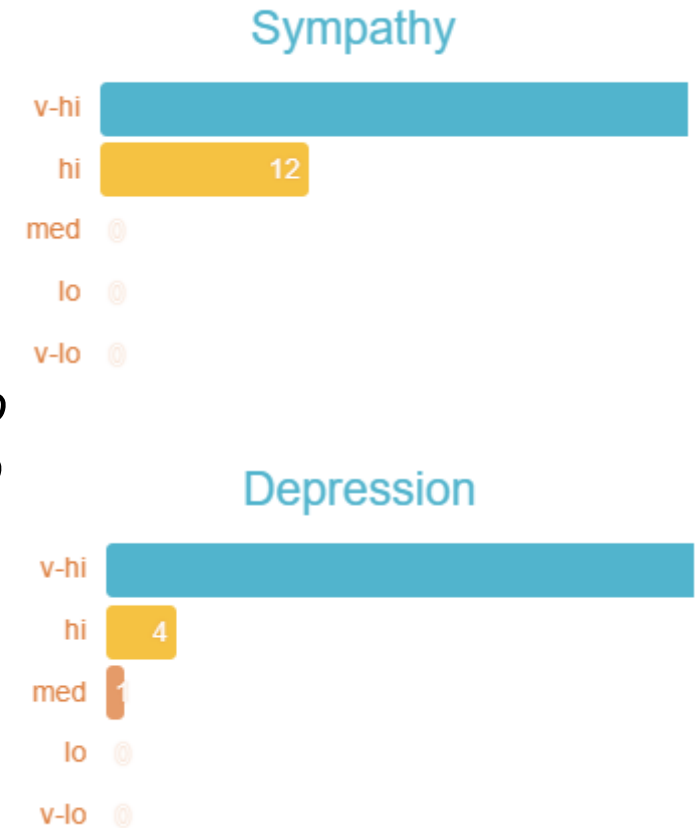
- Hardship becomes a pathway to belonging
- Shared struggles are difficult and painful; and often build lasting empathy, and may even lead to trust over time

Voices from participants

- *“I played a major role in providing services and resources to change someone’s situation, showing up every day ready to help”*

Emotional signals

- Sympathy 100 % High/Very High
- Depression 98.7 % High/Very High



What the stories show us

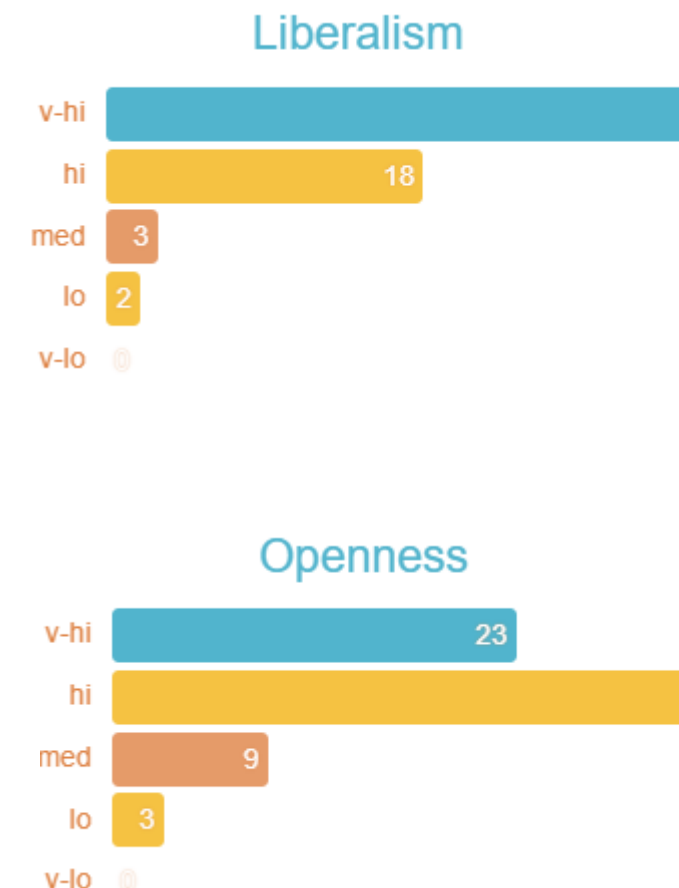
- Traditions, food, and ancestry deepen identity
- Sharing heritage invites mutual respect and connection

Voices from participants

- *“It was the first time I understood that Africa was my ancestral land, and I felt a powerful connection to the music and people”*

Emotional signals

- Liberalism 93.5 % High/Very High
- Openness 84 % High/Very High



What the stories show us

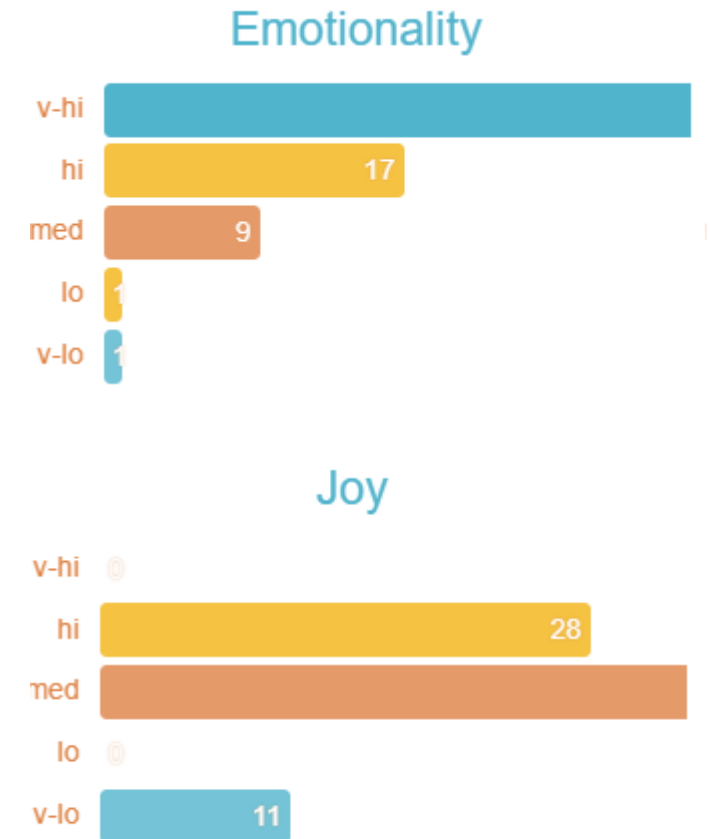
- Belonging is sensory: seen, heard, and physically felt
- Vivid sights and sounds make acceptance feel tangible

Voices from participants

- *“Running through the streets of Richmond during the marathon, I heard the cheers and felt the city holding us in a collective embrace”*

Emotional signals

- Emotionality 85.7 % High/Very High
- Joy 46.8 % High/Very High



- **Common Ground** – All groups centered belonging on relationships and empathy (Community 73%, Family 55%, Sympathy 100%)
- **Black participants** – Resilience and shared struggle; very high Sympathy and Depression
- **White participants** – Heritage and civic connection; strong Self-Transcendence and Openness
- **Women** – Multi-sensory stories; high Emotionality and Openness
- **Men** – Service and responsibility; higher Dutifulness and Structure
- **Age** – 45–64 blend past and future; under-35 stress aspiration and action with higher Curiosity

What the Stories Show Us

- Belonging is lived and shared, built through relationships, empathy, and everyday acts of connection
- Across age, race, and role, participants describe community and family ties as the heart of belonging, whether recalling the past or imagining 2035

Emotional Signals and Implications

- Sympathy 100 % High/Very High, Depression 98.7 %, Intellect 98.7 %
- Belonging carries deep empathy, acknowledges struggle, and invites reflection and meaning-making
- Evidence that emotional connection is both the driver and the outcome of belonging

Belonging is...

A lived experience of recognition, acceptance, and connection

Rooted in empathy, shared history, and the courage to imagine a common future

Built through relationships, everyday acts of care, and communities that honor every voice

Felt in moments of trust, reflection, and the sensory details that make us know we are home

Story Colab (Groups of 2 to 3)

15 minutes

- Discuss which themes resonated with you and why
- Reflect on your own belonging story (whether you submitted or not)
- Identify commonalities across your experiences

Explore the sensory and emotional aspects of your experiences

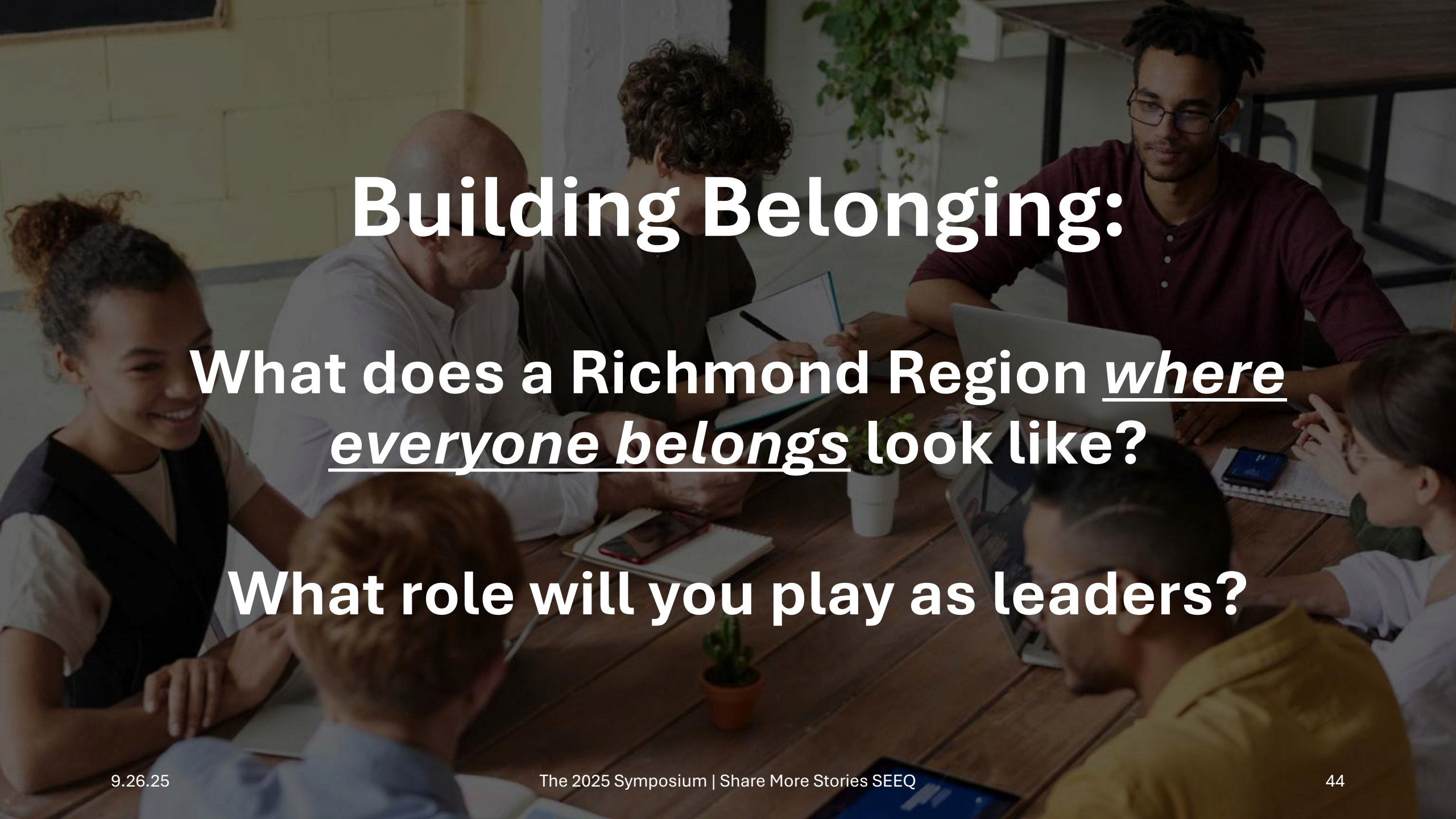
Group/table scribe add to Mentimeter

Debrief



A photograph of a light-colored ceramic cup filled with coffee, sitting on a matching saucer. To the right of the cup is a small, clear glass vase containing green ferns and red flowers, tied with a yellow ribbon. The items are on a light-colored wooden surface, likely a windowsill. In the background, a window looks out onto a blurred outdoor scene with some foliage. The text "Take A Break" is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

Take A Break

A diverse group of people, including a woman with curly hair, a man with glasses, and a man with dreadlocks, are gathered around a wooden table in a meeting. They are looking at laptops and papers, suggesting a collaborative work environment. The background shows a modern office space with a plant and a staircase.

Building Belonging:

What does a Richmond Region where everyone belongs look like?

What role will you play as leaders?

Individual Reflection (5 minutes)

Imagine leading, convening or supporting a team, community, or organization where everyone belongs.

What does it look like? What does it *feel* like?

What's your role?

What systems are present/absent?

What kinds of behaviors, actions and experiences are evident?

At your table:

Identify 3 to 5 principles of collective belonging (HOW)

Identify 3 to 5 leadership actions that build belonging (WHAT)

Table Scribe add to Mentimeter

Debrief and Synthesis

Key Principles

Leadership Actions

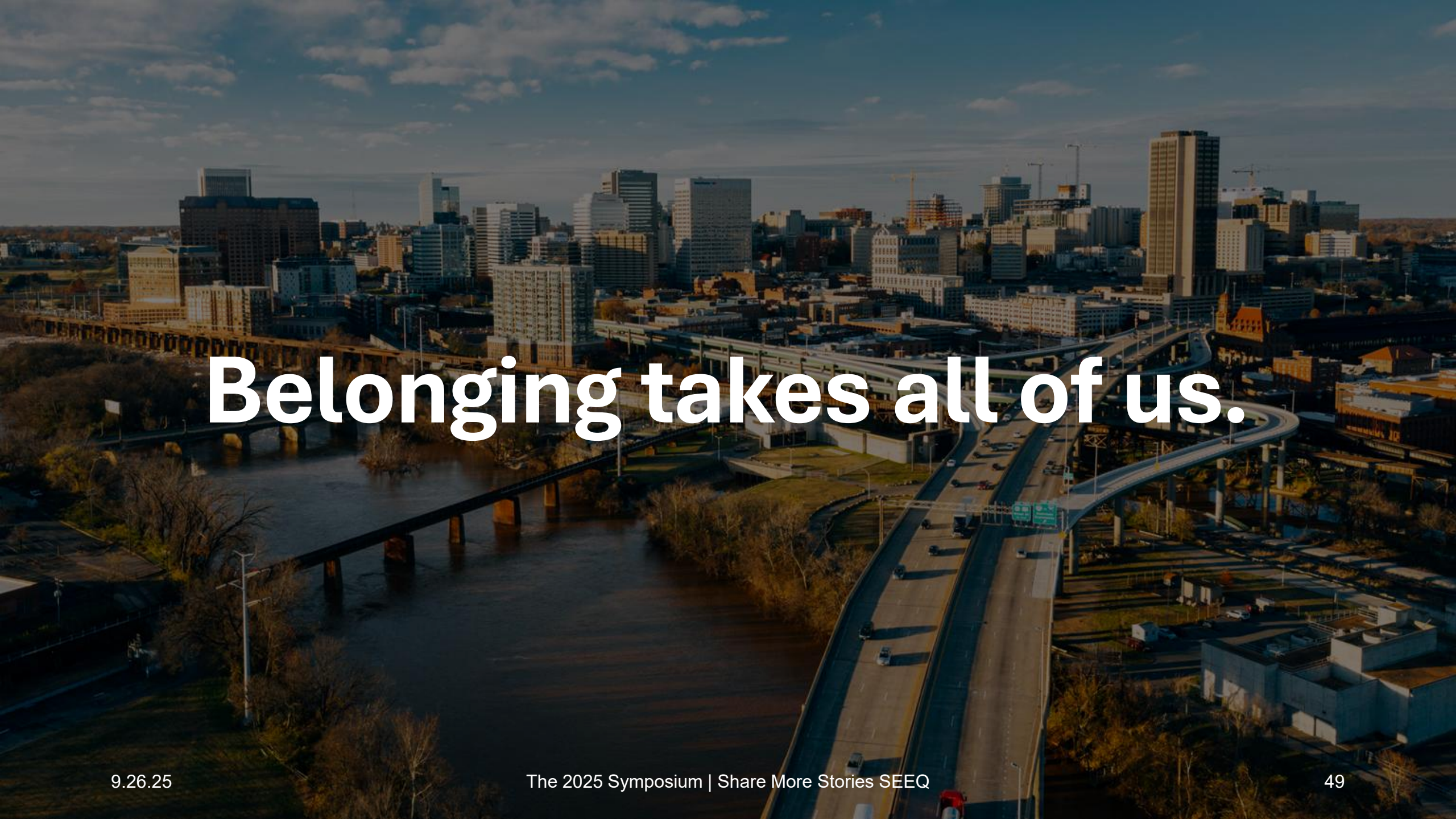
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An aerial photograph of a city skyline, likely New York City, featuring a river, a bridge, and a multi-lane highway. The text "Belonging takes all of us." is overlaid in large white letters.

Belonging takes all of us.

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Q&A

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