



## To Tell the Truth: Race, Identity, and Healing Rachel Jamison Webster

Professor of creative writing at Northwestern University and author of *Benjamin Banneker and Us: Eleven Generations of an American Family*.

## Melissa Blount, Ph.D.

Artist, writer, and licensed clinical psychologist.

**Thursday, April 4, 2024, 7:00 PM (on Zoom)**

**Register: [www.bit.ly/WebsterFANWebinar](http://www.bit.ly/WebsterFANWebinar)**

**PLUS: After-Hours Event!**

Purchase a copy of *Benjamin Banneker and Us* from FAN's partner bookseller The Book Stall to receive a link to an interactive "After-Hours" event hosted by Webster and Blount. Details on the Zoom registration form.

Presented by **Family Action Network (FAN)**, in partnership with

The Alliance for Early Childhood, The Avery Coonley School, Baker Demonstration School, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Brickton Montessori School, British International School of Chicago/Lincoln Park, British International School of Chicago/South Loop, Catherine Cook School, Chicago Jewish Day School, Compass Health Center, Connections for the Homeless, Evanston Scholars, Evanston Township HS D202, The Family Institute at Northwestern University, Family Service Center, Foundation 65, The Frances Xavier Warde School, Francis W. Parker School, Gorton Center, Grayslake Community High School D127, Haven Youth and Family Services, Hyde Park Day School, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, Lake Forest Academy, Lake Forest Country Day School, Lake Michigan Association of Independent Schools, Latin School of Chicago, Leo Catholic High School, Loyola Academy, Lycée Français de Chicago, Mindful Psychology Associates, Morgan Park Academy, New Trier High School D203, New Trier Parents' Association, North Shore Country Day, Northwestern University Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy, Rebel Human, Regina Dominican High School, Resurrection College Prep High School, Rogers Park Montessori School, Roycemore School, Santa Clara University School of Law, Science & Arts Academy, The Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, Stevenson High School D125, University of Chicago Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice, Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District, Woodlands Academy, and Youth & Opportunity United.

This event is #freeandopentothe public and will be recorded. Suitable for youth 12+. [familyactionnetwork.net](http://familyactionnetwork.net)

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: RACHEL JAMISON WEBSTER – ON ZOOM**

**CONTACT:** Lonnie Stonitsch, Executive Director of FAN, lonnie@familyactionnetwork.net

**Thursday, April 4, 2024, 7:00 PM, To Tell the Truth: Race, Identity, and Healing, a FAN webinar featuring Rachel Jamison Webster, in conversation with Melissa Blount, Ph.D.**

**REGISTER:** [www.bit.ly/WebsterFANWebinar](http://www.bit.ly/WebsterFANWebinar)

**BONUS AFTER-HOURS EVENT:** Attendees who purchase a copy of *Benjamin Banneker and Us* from FAN's partner bookseller The Book Stall are invited to attend an AFTER-HOURS event hosted by Webster and Blount that will start immediately after the webinar. Details on the webinar registration page.

Since the sequencing of the genome in 2003, we have known that humans share 99.9 percent of our DNA with all other humans, regardless of skin tone or nationality, indicating that race is not a biological reality as much as a legal and cultural construction. Today, thanks to sites like Ancestry.com and 23 and Me, these facts are getting personal, as Americans discover ancestries that complicate long-held family identities. What should we do when we discover a family secret? And how can our ancestral stories help to illuminate our present moment?

This conversation begins with the premise that telling the truth is essential for healing. Join **Rachel Jamison Webster**, Professor of Creative Writing at Northwestern University, as she shares the story of her book, *Benjamin Banneker and Us: Eleven Generations of an American Family*. In 2016, Webster learned about several generations of African American ancestry that had been hidden in her family. This line traced back to the sister of Benjamin Banneker—the first Black man of science. Banneker was a free man living in the Revolutionary era. He helped survey Washington D.C., he compiled and published bestselling almanacs, and he corresponded with Jefferson about the heinous injustice of slavery.

Webster's journey led her to celebrate Banneker's brilliance, as well as that of his parents, grandparents, and sisters, and to grapple with the ways that racism had clouded the story of her family and country. She found herself in deep relationship and collaboration with her African American cousins—fellow Banneker descendants who came together to collaborate on the book. Together they celebrated their shared ancestors, and discussed race, history, and identity with unflinching honesty.

Webster will be in conversation with **Melissa Blount, Ph.D.**, an artist, writer, and licensed clinical psychologist practicing her craft in Evanston, IL. Her textile pieces explore notions of Black womanhood, trauma, and white supremacy in America.

This event suitable for youth 12+. It will be recorded and available on FAN's website and YouTube channel.

Sponsored by **Family Action Network (FAN)**, in partnership with **The Alliance for Early Childhood, The Avery Coonley School, Baker Demonstration School, Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School, Brickton Montessori School, British International School of Chicago/Lincoln Park, British International School of Chicago/South Loop, Catherine Cook School, Chicago Jewish Day School, Compass Health Center, Connections for the Homeless, Evanston Scholars, Evanston Township HS D202, The Family Institute at Northwestern University, Family Service Center, Foundation 65, The Frances Xavier Warde School, Francis W. Parker School, Gorton Center, Grayslake Community High School D127, Haven Youth and Family Services, Hyde Park Day School, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, Lake Forest Academy, Lake Forest Country Day School, Lake Michigan Association of Independent Schools, Latin School of Chicago, Leo Catholic High School, Loyola Academy, Lycée Français de Chicago, Mindful Psychology Associates, Morgan Park Academy, New Trier High School D203, New Trier Parents' Association, North Shore Country Day, Northwestern University Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, Northwestern University School of Education and Social Policy, Rebel Human, Regina Dominican High School, Resurrection College Prep High School, Rogers Park Montessori School, Roycemore School, Santa Clara University School of Law, Science & Arts Academy, The Sonia Shankman Orthogenic School, Stevenson High School D125, University of Chicago Crown Family School of Social Work, Policy, and Practice, Winnetka-Northfield Public Library District, Woodlands Academy, Youth & Opportunity United.**