

March 22, 2023

Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis

Principal, Education Counsel

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

TY [@SecSmithEllis](#) for sharing your work & highlighting the new Level-Up. Unapologetically calling us in to action in [#HigherEd](#) for black learners...Join us next week for another fantastic [#EquityChat @CollegeFutures -@Iamkeithcurry @DrTammeil @equityavengers @DrPamLuster](#) OUT!

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrPamLuster @CollegeFutures](#) and 3 others

Thank you! So wonderful to join the chat tonight!

[Dr. Keith Curry #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @Iamkeithcurry](#)

Q8. [@SecSmithEllis](#). The final question for tonight is, what advice would you give other equity practitioners? [@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

Replying to [@SecSmithEllis @DrTammeil](#) and 2 others

It's a labor of love for us, and we so appreciate having partners in the work...everyday...one foot in front of the other! [#EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@Iamkeithcurry @DrPamLuster](#) and 2 others

I spent an insane amount of time also finding and honing tools to make it easier for me to get things done. I use project management software. I have a planner for work and for home. I listen to podcasts on productivity (in between [@Beyonce](#)) Find what works for you.

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@Iamkeithcurry @DrPamLuster](#) and 2 others

Make time for yourself. Find a hobby, an outlet, a friend or two. This work is important and to do it well you need to be rested, be able to think clearly, be focused.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Q7. [@SecSmithEllis](#). As you reflect on your work, what gives you hope? [@DrPamLuster @Iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrTammeil @DrPamLuster and 2 others](#)

This work gives me hope! This chat gives me hope! The fact that people care about this issue, are tuning in, are thinking about their commitments. The wonderful, bipartisan group of leaders who signed onto the Call to Action, all give me hope.

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrTammeil @DrPamLuster and 2 others](#)

The [#EquityAvengers](#) give me hope! I'm thankful for you all inviting me into this space. It is so wonderful to be in community

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

Q6. [@SecSmithEllis](#). To do this work, we must continue learning and partnering with others. Who/what is informing our practice? Who do you recommend we follow, and what are you learning from them? [@DrTammeil @Iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil and 2 others](#)

So many great folks. I love my people at [@EdTrust](#), [@Wil EdTrust @chrisnellum](#). Former colleague [@TiffanyJonesPhD](#) is doing great work at Gates. I learn every day from younger folks in policy like [@SatraFierce](#) and [@sellensatt @mcanthonyjr](#). So thankful for their leadership!

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

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Oooh for more policy peeps follow [@Bob_Shireman @TCFdotorg](#)

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Replying to [@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil and 2 others](#)

And then more broadly [@tressiemcphd](#) is a national gem

[Dr. Keith Curry #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @Iamkeithcurry](#)

Q5. [@SecSmithEllis](#). LEVEL-UP is focused on transformative change, and we are grateful to spread the work of LEVEL-UP nationally. Can you share how others can get involved with this work? [@DrTammeil @DrPamLuster #EquityChat](#)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@IamKeithCurry](#) [@DrTammeil](#) and [@DrPamLuster](#)

We are looking for partners in this work, and to be real and transparent, very much need continued and new philanthropic partners too. (Closed mouths...)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@IamKeithCurry](#) [@DrTammeil](#) and [@DrPamLuster](#)

Anyone interested in our effort to LEVELUP and get REAL on behalf of black learners should go to community4blacklearnerexcellence.com
[Realizing Black Learner Excellence in Higher Ed](#)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@IamKeithCurry](#) [@DrTammeil](#) and [@DrPamLuster](#)

We are looking for places to host community meetings to listen and learn and strategize in local contexts too. Because while this is a fantastic group and the report is dope... *whispers* we don't have ALL the answers

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@IamKeithCurry](#) [@DrPamLuster](#) and 3 others

This call to action says that in order to LEVELUP our commitment to Black Learners, we have to Get REAL. We have to look at what works, and ask are we doing our work the best we can to get to the core of what we need to do on behalf of Black Learners.

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrPamLuster](#) [@IamKeithCurry](#) and 3 others

Getting REAL means providing Real transparency and affordability, Ensuring shared ownership for student success, providing Academic and social supports, and Learner centered supports

Q4. [@SecSmithEllis](#). What would you say are the "Big E" and "Small E" goals to achieve equity? How does your work with LEVEL-UP advance achieving these goals? [@DrPamLuster](#) [@IamKeithCurry](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) [#EquityChat](#) [@equityavengers](#)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrTammeil](#) [@DrPamLuster](#) and 3 others

Big E - Ensuring shared ownership for results - data and accountability at every level are a necessary part of this work. Holding yourself accountable and others in positions of decision making and policy making authority.

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrTammeil @DrPamLuster and 3 others](#)

Small E - empathy. We all need more of it. listening to students, learning from colleagues and others who work in different contexts and environments. Learning all the lessons we can along the way.

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

Q3. [@SecSmithEllis](#). Tell us about LEVEL-UP and share the priorities of this work. [#EquityChat](#)

[@iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures @DrTammeil @equityavengers](#)

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/627979a3d58c762418608d6d/t/64187016fee04d7e8ea72c6/1679323159547/LevelUp_Report_FINAL2023.pdf...

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrPamLuster @Iamkeithcurry and 3 others](#)

LEVELUP is about Leveraging Explicit Value for Every Black Learner, UnaPologetically! Black learners are clear that they literally cannot afford for their postsecondary journeys to lead them astray, leave them with debt, or with no good job prospects.

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@DrPamLuster @Iamkeithcurry and 3 others](#)

It is time for the federal government, states, systems and institutions to LEVEL UP their commitments on behalf of black learners by getting REAL

[Dr. Keith Curry #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @Iamkeithcurry](#)

Q2. [@SecSmithEllis](#). How does the [#Blacklearner](#) excellence call to action speak to your journey

as an [#unapologeticleader](#)? [#EquityChat @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures](#)

[@equityavengers](#)

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis 19h](#)

Replying to [@Iamkeithcurry @DrPamLuster and 3 others](#)

At some point in our careers, we all have to step back and say, am I really doing work that matters? What do I care most about, and what is the most effective way to make a difference?

[Dr. Zakiya Smith Ellis @SecSmithEllis](#)

Replying to [@Iamkeithcurry @DrPamLuster and 3 others](#)

That's what I've had to assess in my journey as an [#unapologeticleader](#) and what I think this Call to Action speaks to at its core.

Q1 . [@SecSmithEllis](#). As you engage in equity-focused work, what is your walk-up song or anthem? [@DrPamLuster](#) [@Iamkeithcurry](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) [#EquityChat](#) [@equityavengers](#)

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I have several

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When I would drive to Trenton [@NJGov](#) I would alternate between [@Beyonce](#) Formation and [@HamiltonMusical](#) My Shot

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Replying to [@DrTammeil](#) [@DrPamLuster](#) and 3 others

Preview of where I think we may go in this chat tonight...would be [#LEVELUP](#)

Replying to [@SecSmithEllis](#) [@DrPamLuster](#) and 5 others

Yes!! Tackling policy, strategy, law, and advocacy to transform our education system in the U.S.!

[Dr Pamela Luster #EquityAvengers #RealCollegePrez @DrPamLuster](#)

Replying to [@SecSmithEllis](#) [@CollegeFutures](#) and 5 others

happy to host you tonight and excited to hear about your work!