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[5:00 pm] [Dr. Pam Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Welcome to #EquityChat w/your hosts @lamkeithcurry @DrTammeil & @DrPamLuster Tonight we welcome @AstroZed186 @sdmesacollege alum and aspiring astronaut! Welcome Mario!

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

Thank you all for the invite! I'm glad to be here, hanging with you all!

[5:05 pm] [Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q1 Mario [@AstroZed186](#). As you engage in equity-focused work, what is your walk-up song or anthem?
[@DrPamLuster @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

Hi all! & thanks for the invite! Without question it's, "Changes," by Tupac Shakur. For me, it inspires equal parts rage (useful) & hope intertwined. But its most forceful aspect is the call to action that it demands from us.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

Awww, Mario! A music lover after my own heart! I love how you said, "Equal parts rage (useful) & hope intertwined!" I so vibe with it! <https://youtu.be/eXvBjCO19QY>

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

You know I'm bumping it now.

[5:11 pm] [Dr. Keith Curry \(@lamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q2 Mario [@AstroZed186](#). Our education, background, and experiences make us who we are. Please tell us more about what makes you, you. [@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(1/2) My insatiable drive comes as a direct result of having witnessed what my mom was able to accomplish as an uneducated single mother of 3.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

I know you make her so proud!

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(2/2) Though we were on welfare and living in section-8 housing growing up, she worked multiple jobs to ensure we were always fed and sheltered, even if it meant motel stays on occasion. I don't know how she did it, but her sacrifice inspires who I am today.

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

The power of that deep love of mothers to do whatever it takes...and look at you paying it forward, Mario! Now bumping 2Pac and Dear Mama... <https://youtu.be/Mb1ZvUDvLDY>

[5:18 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Q3 Mario @AstroZed186. Was there a defining moment or experience that catalyzed your journey from @USNavy SEAL to aspiring @NASA Astronaut? @DrTammeil @lamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(1/3) In the SEAL teams, we're constantly confronting the seedier underbellies of society. Over time, that constant search for "bad" guys can grind down your positive outlook on life and leave you an embittered victim of your own confirmation bias.

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(2/3) One day, I looked around and noticed that there were no elders in the SEAL teams that I cared to emulate. They had all become bitter.

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(3/3) This terrified me, and I knew the only way to re-capture my childhood wonderment, joy, and curiosity was to leave the teams and pursue space. For me, space was the key.

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

There is so much here [@AstroZed186](#), and what a gift that you had the wisdom to assess, reflect and act in such an intense environment. [#EquityChat](#)

[5:25 pm] [Dr. Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q4 Mario @AstroZed186. As a @sdmesacollege student, you helped form the Student Veteran Organization & advocated for an on-campus Veteran Resource Center. How does supporting our student veterans help advance #racialequity? @DrPamLuster @iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(1/2) Personally speaking, I wasn't the best student in my youth, nor did I have much access to resources. So, later, when I left the military to pursue education, I was both hesitant and somewhat fearful.

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(2/2) The help that I, and those like me, received essentially guaranteed equal footing with those around me. I largely credit where I am in life today to the support I received as a student-veteran!

[5:32 pm] [Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q5 Mario @AstroZed186. Seeing our students succeed is what motivates us to keep doing this work. Can you tell us more about being part of the history-making Odysseus lunar landing crew? @DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat

[Mario AstroZed186](#)

(1/2) It's been a thrilling time working with such an awesome team. At Intuitive Machines, I have experienced the best leadership of anywhere prior. I get to build (and name) spaceships for a living, how cool is that!?

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

So cool...

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(2/2) Really though, I'm just fortunate to be a part of an excellent organization who all aspire to retain that same childhood wonder that I do. Odie was the first of many to come, and though there were hiccups, we persevered in the end!

[5:39 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

Q6 Mario @AstroZed186. What do you hope to bring to the role of astronaut? What is your dream mission? @DrTammeil @iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(1/2) I really hope to inspire the youth, particularly those raised in similar impoverished conditions such as I was. As an astronaut, I'd want them to see that they too can make even their loftiest dreams happen.

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

(2/2) My dream space mission is any that would allow me to look back at our entire planet and marvel. Not too much to ask, is it?!

[5:46pm] [Dr. Gilkerson \(@DrTammeil\)](#)

Q7 [Mario @AstroZed186](#). As you reflect on your work and educational experience, what gives you hope?
[@DrPamLuster @iamkeithcurry @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

I feel like this community, and communities like it, give me hope. The efforts that are being made here and the conversations that are being had give me hope. It is you all, in your positions in academia, willing to engage in equity dialogue that inspire hope for the future!

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

Inspired by you and so many others to create these spaces [@AstroZed186](#) keep it coming!

[5:53 pm] [Dr. Curry \(@iamkeithcurry\)](#)

Q8 [Mario @AstroZed186](#). Final question to close tonight's chat, what advice would you give to other equity practitioners? [@DrPamLuster @DrTammeil @CollegeFutures #EquityChat #EquityAvengers](#)

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

My advice to other equity practitioners is to be loud and to make noise. Use your positions and platforms to demand that systems change for the benefit of all, and to continually ask yourself how you could best leverage your position in this endeavor.

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

And that's exactly how [@AstroZed186](#) and his vet colleagues helped us open the VRC
[@sdmesacollege...](#)

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

Very much to the credit of the administration for listening, seeing the need, and taking swift action!

[Dr. Tammeil Gilkerson @DrTammeil](#)

And generations of students will benefit. Let's go [@AstroZed186](#). [#Grateful](#)
[#RacialEquity](#) [#EquityAvengers](#)

[6:00 pm] [Dr. Luster \(@DrPamLuster\)](#)

TY [@AstroZed186](#) for sharing your story [#studentvets](#) [@CalCommColleges](#). Thx 4 [@2PAC](#) & good luck [@NASA](#)
-we need inspiring leaders in all space(s) Next wk. we host [@FoundationCCC](#) Ex Dir of Equity & Impact Iris
Aguilar. [@lamkeithcurry](#) [@DrTammeil](#) [@DrPamLuster](#) [@equityavengers](#) OUT!

[Mario @AstroZed186](#)

Thank you all!