Credible Messengers:
Lived Experience Is Expertise

Episode 3: Credible Messengers in Colleges and Universities

Summary:

Host Armonté Butler talks to his own credible messenger, Yasmine Arrington, and an associate professor at the University of Chicago, Dr. Micere Keels. Yasmine is the Founder and Executive Director of ScholarCHIPS, Inc., an organization that provides college scholarships, mentoring, mental health supports, and a peer support network to children of incarcerated parents, inspiring them to complete their college education. Armonté shares from his own experiences and discusses the impact Yasmine (and others) had in his life. Dr. Keels helps unpack the research around credible messengers and near-peer mentors. She and Armonté also explore how race, ethnicity, and poverty affect the supports and challenges young people experience.

Host:

Armonté Butler is a writer and activist based in Washington, DC.

Guests:

Yasmine "YazzieSpeaks" Arrington was born and raised in Washington, DC. She is a 2015 Elon University graduate in Strategic Communications and History. Yasmine earned her Master of Divinity degree from the Howard University School of Divinity in May 2018. In 2010, while a junior in high school, Yasmine founded the non-profit ScholarCHIPS, Inc. (www.scholarchipsfund.org), an organization that provides college scholarships, mentoring, mental health supports, and a peer support network to children of incarcerated parents, inspiring them to complete their college education. To date, ScholarCHIPS has awarded over $400,000 in college scholarships to 81 scholars, with 33 graduates to date.

Dr. Micere Keels is an Associate Professor in the Department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. Her research focuses on understanding how race, ethnicity, and poverty structure the supports and challenges that youth experience. Her longitudinal study of over 500 Black and Latinx students attending historically white institutions resulted in several articles, policy reports, and a recently published book, *Campus Counterspaces*. The book discusses how counterspaces enable historically marginalized students to gather, validate, and critique their experiences with the larger institution, and develop counter narratives that challenge dominant representations and notions concerning their marginalized identities.

(Music for opening credits)

Armonté Butler: (0:13)
When it came to all these values that, I think, other people have of, like, "We're going to college, this is how to do it, this roadmap," I didn't have.

Dr. Micere Keels: (0:20)
If you're coming from a home and cultural background where you don't have a lot of models in your family or social network that can show you how to do college, how to make it work, you're going to need to rely on others.

Yasmine Arrington: (0:34)
I think that for, probably, most college students, college is a shock because this is the first time that you are living independently, navigating, especially from a place like how we are, having an incarcerated parent and all of these things. It's absolutely essential for us to have credible messengers on campus.

Armonté Butler: (1:00)
Welcome to the Credible Messengers Podcast. The credible messengers podcast is a six-part series that demonstrates that lived experience is expertise by telling stories from the frontlines of credible messenger work as well as examining the research on the efficacy of credible messenger mentoring programs. This podcast is produced by a group of Youth Policy Consultants from the American Youth Policy Forum. We believe that dedicated credible messenger programs in the legal system, child welfare, K-12 schools, and college settings are a powerful way to build community and connections for youth success. We want to see credible messengers move from the margins to become an integral pillar of every system that serves young people marginalized by systemic inequities.

Research supports our claim that credible messengers are effective, and we want to see more research, more funding for that research, and more funding for credible messenger programs. We also want to see an elevation of the role so that it receives the respect, training, and adequate pay as other professions. Through this six-part series, we will show you lived examples of this in practice, as well as point you to the research.

If you're a young person who has a parent who was incarcerated or you were the first from your family to go to college, this podcast is for you. If you're a person in a position to fund research or a researcher in the position to examine credible messenger programs, please join our conversation. Are you ready? Let's go.

Armonté Butler: (2:21)
This is Episode 3: Credible Messengers in Colleges and Universities, and I'm your host, Armonté Butler. I'm a Youth Policy Consultant with the American Youth Policy Forum. I'm the child of an incarcerated parent that navigated that during high school and then in college, and I'm also born and raised in Washington, DC. Today, we have two guests. First, we will speak with Yasmine Arrington, founder and executive director of ScholarCHIPS, a nonprofit charitable organization that supports graduating high school seniors with incarcerated parents, whose work had a profound impact on my own education journey. Then we look at the data and research with Dr. Keels, an associate professor in comparative human development at the University of Chicago. She focuses on understanding how race and ethnicity and poverty structure the supports and challenges that children and youth experience.

I'd like to introduce our guest Yasmine Arrington, founder and executive director of ScholarCHIPS Incorporated. I've known Yasmine since I was in high school. Yasmine, thank you so much for joining us today. This means a lot to me because your organization and your role in my life has been so impactful.

Yasmine Arrington: (03:31)
Thank you Armonté and American Youth Policy Forum for having me. It's really a pleasure and an honor. My name is Yasmine Arrington, I'm affectionately known as Yazzie or YazzieSpeaks. I was born and raised in Washington DC in the '90s, which was affectionately known as Chocolate City. I am a product of DC Public Schools. I'm the founder and executive director of the DC-based nonprofit organization called ScholarCHIPS, Inc. The CHIPS is an imperfect acronym for children of or children with incarcerated parents. And our mission is to provide college scholarships, mentoring, mental health supports, and a support network to college-bound young adults with incarcerated parents. Over 2 million young people or 10 million people in the United States have had an incarcerated parent from between their birth to age 18. And so, there are literally millions of us out there.

Part of my personal story and testimony is that my father has been in and out of jail and prison my entire life. I identified mass incarceration and the prison-industrial complex as a social issue that bothered me that I wanted to see change and improve. So, at 15, 16 years old, I got a $1,000 seed grant to launch ScholarCHIPS. Fast forward, ScholarCHIPS is a full blown, independent 501(c)(3) organization. We've supported 80 young people, such as Armonté, who have had or have an incarcerated parent or parents. They've gone on to pursue higher education. We've had 33 college graduates to date, and we've awarded over $415,000 in college scholarships, book awards, emergency funds, and graduation gifts. So that is how I started ScholarCHIPS.

Armonté Butler: (05:23)
Awesome, thank you for sharing that exciting background. I want to talk about my own experience with ScholarCHIPS just a little bit. First, in that, you know, you've played a large

role of being a credible messenger in my life. Looking back to when we first met, I remember you in the halls and often carrying too many books. You were admired by several people, and you were always friendly and well-liked. You know, during my 10th, 11th, and 12th grade year in high school was really hard, right, my father was incarcerated. And I think that I saw you as a credible messenger because of our kind of similar backgrounds, right? African American, attending the same high school, and also the fact that you were so open about having a parent who was incarcerated in a way that wasn't, like, stigmatize me or feel sorry for me. But this is just another part of my life that so happens to have happened to me. And here's what I'm passionate about. And I think looking back for me in high school that meant so much because again, I didn't know anyone else that had talked about or had said, "I had a father that was incarcerated" at all. It was just so helpful and important that you were using your voice for change in the way of talking about a very highly sensitive subject, in a way with such tender care. So, thank you, for all of the work that you're continuing to do with ScholarCHIPS.

Yasmine Arrington: (06:30)
That's amazing Armonté, thanks for sharing that. It's a very powerful reflection, and I thank you for that. We've taken this life circumstance that typically is very taboo, very stigmatized, you know, we flip that paradigm, that coin on its head. And we're saying, just like you said, you know, this is one aspect of my life, of my life experience, but it's not the fullness of my identity, and it doesn't limit who I am and what I'm capable of, right, all of those things. So, I appreciate that, Armonté, you know, that you have a special place in my heart. So, thank you for that.

Armonté Butler: (07:07)
Yeah, no, you too. Thank you for sharing. And I think I want to kind of highlight or point out something you just brought up, really about lived experience, or shared same experience. Can you tell us a bit more about what makes a credible messenger credible, and how this definition shows up in the work that you do?

Yasmine Arrington: (07:23)
For me, a credible messenger is someone who has a similar or shared life experience with the individual that they are coming to walk alongside. The credible messenger is someone who has been there, done that, and who can just really be a positive source, be a source of love, a source of kindness, and a source of tough love, if necessary, to help and assist and encourage and inspire folks who have similar experiences going on a path that they've already walked. Real talk, credible messengers are often people that come from impoverished communities, they're people that come from backgrounds where their families were estranged, and/or even traumatic life experiences. So really, from my perspective, that's really who and what it is we're talking about when it comes to what is a credible messenger and what makes a messenger or person credible, right.

Armonté Butler: (08:17)
Right at the onset of COVID-19 happening, you all were launching a mentorship program. So, I would like to actually, now, you know, how are mentors who are credible messengers a part of ScholarCHIPS programming?

Yasmine Arrington: (08:28)
Well, I'll just talk a little bit about the current model. Credible messenger-ing comes from a few different places, right. So, you know, it's me interacting with scholars, it's scholars interacting with scholars, because they're also credible messengers, right, amongst each other. And then it's the mentors interacting with scholars and, you know, some cases, board members interacting with scholars, right. And so, it's, it's really about establishing a support network of people who understand and can empathize and share in some of the same experiences and ultimately provide that encouragement and support.

The severity of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020 was when ScholarCHIPS launched our one-on-one mentoring program. And so, within the one-on-one mentoring program, we have about 30 mentors. Many of them are credible messengers to our scholars for a number of reasons. We are still developing this model and trying to improve it. But one thing about credible messenger mentoring is that it has historically looked like one thing where credible messengers are formerly incarcerated and or returning citizens, and they're providing, like, violence intervention and prevention, diversion programming, and encouragement to systems-involved youth. But now we're beginning to expand the understanding of what a credible messenger is and could look like, and, so, ScholarCHIPS, we're still trying to figure out what makes a successful credible messengering program within an organization like ScholarCHIPS.

Armonté Butler: (10:07)
You know, even when I was in ScholarCHIPS, there were several folks that I was engaging with on the phone. And I really appreciated those mentorship conversations, because it wasn't just, you know, "Hey, how's school?", it was like, "How's school and how's family? Like, how is your family doing too?"

Yasmine Arrington: (10:21)
And how are you? And how are you doing?

Armonté Butler: (10:23)
Yes, yes. And how are you doing as well? And I always look back at that, like, whoa, like you all were the organization that wasn't just asking me, you know, what grade did you get on that bio test, but it was really like, you know, how was the semester? And how is your family? How is your family supporting your father right now with paying for things like commissary, or how's your siblings who might still be in shock or trauma or impacted by having a father who's not in the household right now? So that's something I appreciate you all for as well, of seeing me as not just student but also student, Armonté, and still dealing

with the experiences of what most people, including you, have dealt with while being on the college campus, where you're not just there doing grades or school, but you're still thinking about family and at home all the time.

(Segue music)

So, as you and your program served as credible messengers for me during my college experience, I didn't really have a credible messenger mentor on my campus. Do you think there should be credible messengers on college campuses?

Yasmine Arrington: (11:22)
I think that for probably most college students, college is a shock, because this is the first time that you are living independently. It's just a lot of challenges that you encounter. I mean, whether it's social challenges, or like, you know, things you're trying to navigate, relationships, classes, all these different subjects, you know, managing your time, right, then navigating, especially from a place like how we are having an incarcerated parent and all of these things, it's absolutely essential for us to have credible messengers on campus, because what that means is that you have someone on campus, again, who has similar and or shared life experiences.

Armonté Butler: (12:08)
It's so important to think about that. And I don't think that a lot of folks are thinking about that, the college experience of what it's like, but you really illustrate it, you know, the need for model credible messenger programs on college campuses.

So, what's next for credible messengers?

Yasmine Arrington: (12:25)
Where you and I, Armonté, fall in, we're the 2.0, we're the Credible Messenger Mentor Movement 2.0. I believe that we're part of a movement, we're a part of something bigger. I never knew I was a credible messenger; that had to be taught to me. So we are, in essence, you know, now we've realized that we're credible messengers in the work, in the spaces that we're in. And so now we just have to tap on and wake up others who are a part of the movement also, whether or not they realize it.

Armonté Butler: (12:58)
Thank you, Yasmine, for joining us on this podcast. I wish you the best in the great work that you do.

Yasmine Arrington: (13:03)
Thank you, Armonté. Thank you, American Youth Policy Forum.

Armonté Butler: (13:11)
It was great to hear from Yasmine talk about her organization and how she's working to make it a credible messenger organization. Back then, I wasn't familiar with the term either, I just knew that I didn't have mentorship resources that other people might have had. What I had a lot in college is a term that Dr. Keels will describe later, known as near-peers. For me, near-peers were peers that were either in a year above me or two years above me, that had participated in a class or a course that was very similar, but they were also from a very similar background, culture, or lived experiences as I was. And while they served a critical role for me in ensuring that I knew where to go and that I had a map, they weren't paid for this work. They were not incentivized at all; they were really doing it out of the goodness of their heart. And recognizing near-peers is important, but it's not enough. We need them in a formalized training and adequately paid program that's really recognizing that this is a credible messenger program.

After recognizing that other people might have had these resources that I didn't, I thought, where's the research? Where's the data? And I knew to reach out to Dr. Keels to figure out what's happening now, and what can happen in the future in terms of action so that everyone can experience credible messenger programs. What interested me about Dr. Keels' research is her minority college cohort study. Long story short, it was a study that tracked a cohort of about 500 Black and Latinx students who were enrolled in one of five historically white universities in Illinois in 2013. The study really looked at, what are the challenges that they're facing on campus? And what are some solutions that can be offered to ensure that they not just attend college, but they also thrive and graduate. I also attended a historically white university in rural Tennessee. So really looking at the study and saying, oh, these were your experiences in 2013. I was dealing with the same thing in 2016, 2017 as well.

Hi, Dr. Keels, thank you for joining me today. I was so excited to chat with you because I'm interested in your work with the minority college cohort study. So, with this amazing study, I'd love for you to introduce yourself and tell us who you are.

Dr. Micere Keels: (15:14)
My name is Micere Keels. I am an associate professor at the University of Chicago. 20 plus years now, I've been doing a series of studies trying to understand the educational challenges, opportunities, and successes of kids and youth from historically marginalized backgrounds.

Armonté Butler: (15:36)
Awesome, thank you so much for sharing that. Can you tell us a bit more about, like, what does the research tell us about the value of credible messaging and university programs?

Dr. Micere Keels: (15:44)
So, I would say, one, the research is growing. But if we think broader around what we know about near-peer mentoring and what that can tell us is that most college advisors are white men and women who are not first-generation students; they have a family history of college success. Often, most college advisors then themselves had a fairly easy path through school, in that, you know, it worked for them, it clicked for them, and it was successful. And so sometimes those individuals can struggle to advise others who come from a very different racial, ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic background, because they didn't have that experience themselves.

And so, one of the things that we found is that when we first, the first year of serving students, our survey asked them about guidance from their official campus and college advisors, and we quickly learned that those were actually not the people that they were going to when they listed as who was the most helpful. So, they would talk about the advice, the information they got from those meetings. But then when we asked a different question about, like, what was your most helpful source of guidance and advice, they weren't listing their former college advisors as the people who are giving them the most helpful advice. That was coming from folks who had similar backgrounds or similar struggles as they did. One of the things that we're learning is that the people who are formally listed as college advisors may not be the best sources of information for underrepresented students. And so, then who do they turn to? They're turning to their near-peer mentors for that information and guidance that can really help and get them through.

Armonté Butler: (17:33)
This term of choosing "near peer mentor." Can you define that and whether or not that is similar to the term "credible messenger"?

Dr. Micere Keels: (17:41)
Yeah, so often, you know, credible messengers, it's defined is, doesn't have to be a near-peer, but it's someone who has come from a similar background as the person that is being mentored or advised. So they come from a similar background, and they experience some challenges and struggles in the institution or environment. And they have been able to overcome those challenges, and now willing to share and mentor and support others. That's what we think of as a credible messenger. So, you know, if I'm a Black student, coming to a historically white campus, a credible messenger for me, is another Black, Latinx, or other students from a culturally underrepresented group who also has had to figure out how to navigate being in the cultural minority of this institution, and can then help me think about how can I best show up in this institution. So that person is credible to me because they've gone through it, and they've figured it out. What I think of as a near-peer mentor is someone who is just ahead of me in this institution in this system. And I can look to their successes, both as an example to show me that, yeah, I can be successful here

also, and then also ask them for support and guidance and for information from what they've learned.

Armonté Butler: (19:02)
Awesome, thank you for sharing that. Can you tell us a bit about what research still needs to be done and what needs to be funded?

Dr. Micere Keels: (19:08)
One of the things that we do need to understand better is, what is the mentorship training that's needed for credible messengers in order to ensure that they themselves have the tools to be a successful messenger and mentor for those coming up just behind them? I'm not sure that we have a good understanding of what training is needed and whether training increases their ability to be successful. So that's one thing that I think that is still needed in the research, and then actual evidence for its benefits. So, we have kind of anecdotal evidence, we have a few studies about near-peer mentors, but I do think we need more research evaluating how much does it actually affect both academic persistence, but also how does it affect the wellbeing of the individual as they're persisting? So oftentimes, Black and Latinx students who do persist and graduate, sometimes it comes at the expense of their psychological and emotional wellbeing. And so, we want to know can credible messengers both increase persistence and help improve and strengthen their well-being as they're going through college, because we want people to graduate and graduate healthy and well.

Funding wise, I just, I don't think that we've invested in funding for credible messengers. And this is often done out of the goodness of students' hearts and their desire to see others succeed. But it's often unpaid labor that's happening. And so, it's both funding students to do the work, funding administrators to help organize, and plan and support students doing this work. Things like work-study programs can be used to fund this type of work in campuses. So, there's no reason that work-study students need to be stacking books or organizing things in the library. They can be doing this type of work to help increase the success and persistence of underrepresented students, Black and Latinx students, and others.

Armonté Butler: (21:05)
And you know, thinking about the university investments, work funding those, do you think that colleges or universities should invest in credible messenger programs? And if so, why or why not?

Dr. Micere Keels: (21:15)
Yes, I do think they should. From the simpler, kind of, actually financial standpoint, there is a benefit, in that colleges spend a lot of money recruiting students, and they're increasingly spending money recruiting Black, Latinx, and other historically marginalized students to campus. And so, if you're going to invest all that money in recruiting those students, and if

students are going to be taking on debt to get through college, investing in programs and supports that increase persistence actually pays off in the end. There is research showing that it's more of a benefit to the dollar invested to increase programs that increase persistence versus continually having to recruit more students to fill the seats for students who dropped out. So, it is absolutely something that colleges and universities should invest in. And they get a high return on the dollar versus just continually recruiting large cohorts, and then having a substantial percent of those students drop out.

Armonté Butler: (22:19)
From your expertise and research, what would you say are three of the most important things that you would look for in a college or university credible messenger program?

Dr. Micere Keels: (22:28)
One important thing that I would look for is to what extent is it student-led. And by student-led what I mean is administrators doing the administrative busy work, so that's not on students. But students that are going to be these credible messengers, that they have had a meaningful role in planning what message is going to be communicated to students that are coming up behind them. It's not just placing Black and Brown students as credible messengers, you know, as figureheads, but that they have a meaningful role in planning, the implementation of the program that those students are paid for their labor. Another piece of it, so it's not that administrators are paid and then all the students working in the program are volunteers, and that the program is well-resourced.

So, one of the things that we found in interviewing students is that many of them were frustrated and disheartened when programs targeting historically marginalized students were in buildings that were not cared for on campus, or like in the basement of a building with no windows and no light. And if this is going to be a place that might be their campus home, where they spend a lot of their time, it also has to be a physically inviting base for them.

Armonté Butler: (23:49)
This was definitely my experience in rural Tennessee. The spaces offered for students of color often felt like an afterthought. These spaces were far from campus, they were dark, and they were not funded well. In her research, Dr. Keels calls these types of places "counter spaces," defined as safe spaces that will enable radical growth.

Can you describe the impact of counter spaces, safe spaces that will enable radical growth, on the lives of minority youth?

Dr. Micere Keels: (24:16)
The impact of counter spaces, what we found is the impact of these spaces is that it increased and enabled the students who are feeling marginalized to feel empowered.

Armonté Butler: (24:34)
You know, thinking about formal credible messenger programs and counter spaces, what would you say are some barriers for creating them?

Dr. Micere Keels: (24:40)
I think one big barrier is just time. Like college students have so much that they are trying to do: classes, there's all the co-curricular clubs and activities, there are all the internships that they're trying to do to have that on their resume. So, to also ask those individuals who are successful to mentor students coming behind them, sometimes that can be a big ask of their time. And then the other is, as I mentioned before, since it is a big ask of their time, they should be paid for that time. And then also, the third, I would say is the extent to which there's actually, you know, training for those students to have the skills that they need, because mentoring is a skilled activity.

Armonté Butler: (25:27)
Also, there's a part of your research that really looked at an interesting finding around Latinx men and cultural values. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Dr. Micere Keels: (25:35)
Most colleges and universities really operate on an individualistic framework, cultural value of individual success, you know, individual struggle, individually figuring things out and making it through on your own. And that really only works if you have a family background and you come into college with a cultural knowledge of how to make this system and this institution work. One of the things that we found is, just, Black and Latin cultures, in general, are much more collective, and much more based on interpersonal support to kind of succeed.

And also, if you're coming from a home and cultural background, where you don't have a lot of models in your family or social network that can show you how to do college, how to make it work, people that you can go to to answer questions, when things come up around courses, all the many decisions that you need to make, you're going to need to rely on others. And so, if you come into college without that family and cultural background, but think that you need to still follow this individualistic ethic and do it all yourself on your own, you're going to struggle.

And that's what we found with Latinx men. For whatever reason, we found that among that sub sample, really strikingly, that Latinx men who connected with others and created this really tight and close-knit study group where they could go to each other with their struggles and with the challenges that they were experiencing, and just be really open about, like I'm struggling, I can't figure this out, they were able to be each other's information network. And when one person got information, they brought it into the network. And they were able to really help each other collectively figure out college.

And we found with some other Latinx men who actually came in with lots of academic preparation, really great test scores, but were still first generation students, they struggled trying to do it on their own if they didn't reach out to ask for help, because college is so much more than your academic preparation, which is why the ones who were in this network of others went to those near-peer mentors, got lots of social support and information support on how to do college, were really able to strengthen and increasingly succeed. But those who had great test scores coming in but tried to figure out on their own how to do college, the stress of trying to figure it out on their own, and all of the things that they didn't know that they didn't know, all of those challenges really undermined their ability to persist and succeed.

Armonté Butler: (28:21)
What would you say are, like, the top three things that you would like to see regarding increased funding streams or ensuring that students get through?

Dr. Micere Keels: (28:30)
Yeah, I think I have one, just one top thing, which is around mental health. So, one of the things that we are increasingly learning about college and stress, the stresses of just life in general and in this post-pandemic world, is the mental health challenges that students are facing. And before the pandemic, there was a mental health crisis among college students. And that crisis was felt most deeply by Black, Latinx, and other historically marginalized students, because in addition to the academic stressors, the "Am I going to succeed here? Am I going to get a good job?" stressors, there was just the cultural incongruence that they were stressing and struggling with, and the demographic marginalization that they were struggling with, like not seeing themselves represented on campus. But then the pandemic just increased all of those stressors.

But what didn't change is the lack of culturally congruent and culturally responsive mental health care and mental health counselors. And so, what we've known for a long time, is that even though Black and Latinx students on campus have high rates of mental health distress, they're very low rates of using campus mental health services, often because it's just not culturally congruent and culturally responsive care. And so, one of the things that we're learning is that having Black and Latinx senior students and training them appropriately to provide non-clinical mental health promotion support is turning out to be something that we can look towards to help bridge this gap between students needing mental health care, and not having culturally responsive mental health clinicians on campus. And so that is something that colleges and universities really need to look towards to thinking. How do we train these students in order to make sure they have the skills to be able to be non-clinical mental health supports? And how do we pay them for doing that work? Because, unfortunately, suicide and other self-harm is increasing, has increased, in this post pandemic world among Black and Latinx youth, particularly Black youth in the US.

Armonté Butler: (31:26)
Thank you for sharing that. And I feel like you know, again, at my school, rural Tennessee, it was very like, I thought, I think there I felt like by the school not having Black, Latinx, or just people that were racial or ethnic minorities that were staff that were, you know, therapists, et cetera. I think that it felt like for me, that it re-stigmatized or further stigmatized mental health in these communities, because, it's like, oh, we can't go there, they don't look like us. And here I am, you know, promoting "Go there, go to services, talk with somebody." And the students like, well, you know, I'm bringing up, you know, this background or this identity, or, you know, even me where it's like, okay, I don't know if, you know, anybody on that, you know, area has a father who's incarcerated, or who knows that they can try. So, I think that's one other thing that, you know, we continue to bring up like, who is the person or the people that are being paid to do this work and ensuring that, you know, we're also recruiting and really building out more posts so that they see themselves? Because again, that might, you know, reduce levels of stigma, mental health, et cetera. So, thank you. And I want to, actually, one last question. Like if I were university staff, I was a president of a university or something like that, what would be your call to action for them?

Dr. Micere Keels: (32:46)
My biggest call to action is, are they listening to historically underrepresented students, Black and Latinx students in particular? Or are they assuming that they know what those students need? I think that would be my biggest call to action. And it can be listening through having some small group meetings with some of those students. It can be listening through looking at the data for identifying which students are most likely to struggle and have challenges and then thinking about "Do we have programs that target those students?" And, also doing campus climate surveys and things like that. And then, as you said, who are your staff? You know, how representative is your staff? You're recruiting more and more of these students to campus, do you have staff who can support them?

(Music for closing credits)

Armonté Butler: (33:57)
Thank you for listening to the Credible Messenger Podcast. We hope that we've inspired you to take action. As Clinton Lacey said in our first episode, let's move credible messengers out of the margins. Let's ensure more credible messenger programs exist and that credible messengers are well paid, supported, resourced, and trained. We need more research, more funding for research, and more formalized, paid roles for credible messengers so that all young people marginalized by systemic inequities can have opportunities to fulfill their dream.

This podcast is hosted and directed by a group of Youth Policy Consultants from AYPF, the American Youth Policy Forum, including:

Abdul Ali: (34:40)
Abdul Ali,

Brittany LaMarr: (34:41)
Brittany LaMarr,

Daftne Sanchez: (34:42)
Daftne Sanchez,

Iliana Pujols: (34:44)
Iliana Pujols,

Armonté Butler: (34:45)
And me, Armonté Butler.

Our executive producer is the American Youth Policy Forum. This show is produced, edited, and mixed by Sarah Daggett of Daggett Consulting LLC. This episode on credible messengers and colleges and universities was directed and hosted by me, Armonté Butler. This is the Credible Messenger Podcast. Thank you for listening.