But I think it's the joy of the fellowship, though. Michael, you have the opportunity to meet people from across the nation, and you all have different backgrounds, but you find this hub in DC because of the fellowship, and you begin to share your personal story, like what brought you here? - Right. - You know, what is gonna be the thing that helps sustain us, 'cause some people, they do come by themselves. Some come with families, some come with spouses, partners, but when you come from across the world to be able to do this fellowship and to be able to... to help fill your own personal cup. Because sometimes that's what you need, but also to expand your voice on a national level. And I think that's the joy of the fellowship.

This is the ORISE Feautrecast. Join host Michael Holtz for conversations with ORISE experts on STEM workforce development, scientific and technical reviews, and the evaluation of radiation exposure. and environmental contamination. You'll also hear from ORISE Research Program participants and their mentors as they talk about their experiences and how they are helping shape the future of science.

Welcome to the ORISE Featurecast.

Welcome to another episode of the ORISE Featurecast. As ever, it's me, your host, Michael Holtz, from the Communications and Marketing Department at the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education. And it is always a joy for me to bring on fellows who are participating in the many programs that ORISE manages.

This episode is no exception as we were talking once again about the Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship. And with me, as she has been for all of these conversations,

is my special guest co -host, Amy Szczepanski. Amy, welcome back to the co -host chair. Yeah, thank you. I feel so fancy to have the title of co -host.

I love it. Thanks so much for keeping me on. Like, what's this, our third episode? It is. So we've got many more on the docket.

on the docket. So yeah, this is this has been great Love this So Amy tell us who are we we having a conversation with today?

So today we're talking with two fellows from the Library of Congress one current fellow Kelsey Beeghly from Florida and a alumni from the Library of Congress I'm Amara Alexander.

So welcome to both of you. - Thank you so much for having us. Happy to be here. - Thank you. Yeah, I'm excited to be here. - I love the Library of Congress,

first of all. I haven't been on the floor, but I have been in the building and I'm a journalist by training. So of course, one of my favorite movies.

in the world is "All the President's Men." And, you know, the scene when Woodward and Bernstein are in the Library of Congress doing research and they pull the camera up and,

you know, to the top of the rotunda and you see them at the tables. I love the Library of Congress. I've always wanted to see that, and one day it's gonna happen, and I have a feeling that Amara may have a key role in it.

to me learning how to how to navigate that but before we get there I'm first of all Amara if you would as an alumni tell me tell me a little bit about your background and then how you got to the fellowship and a little bit later I want to talk about sort of what you took back to your community but but let's start with just kind of your background and how you got to the fellowship in the first place.

- So, I am a former sixth grade science teacher, K -5 STEM teacher, that was my passion. It still is my passion. And so with the fellowship, you have to teach for a certain amount of years and you have the opportunity to apply.

I knew that I wanted something different. I wanted a shift. I wanted to be able to step out of the classroom and be able to have... a voice that was beyond my classroom, beyond my community.

And then I came aware of the Albert Einstein Fellowship. So I applied. Like, you know, why not? Just apply. And was thankful enough to be able to have an opportunity to be selected as one of the 1920 Einstein Fellows.

And I got the best placement, as I will tell anybody in the fellowship, the Library of Congress. [BLANK \_AUDIO] And I enjoyed my time as a fellow. I'm currently now a principal at a middle school back in Chattanooga,

Tennessee. And I've definitely taken the skills of writing and exploring and researching that I did at the Library of Congress in my current job right now.

That's just a little bit about me and how I found my way to the fellowship and what I'm currently doing today. - All right. Awesome thank you so much. Kelsey tell us a little bit about who you are. Yeah so I am from Florida.

I was a first middle school teacher and then for the last two years I was a curriculum and assessment coordinator at a high school. While doing that I was working on getting my PhD in science education from the University of Central Florida so as I was was finishing up my PhD,

working as an administrator, I loved it, but also kind of like a Mara, just looking to see what else I can do to like expand my professional knowledge.

And I came across the Albert Einstein Fellowship on Google. And as soon as I saw it, it was might be a year before I graduated and before I would be eligible to apply. I really worked on my application and spent that whole time kind of researching and thinking about what life would be like in DC as part of this program.

Excellent, thank you for sharing that. Both of you were previously STEM teachers and when I think about STEM I have like a very specific image that comes to mind.

And then when I think of the Library of Congress, I have a very different image that comes to mind. One that before I was for Kelsey, very kindly took me on a tour of the Library of Congress.

I just thought like dust and like books. And in my head, like those two things do like not jive together, but after I get started with it, after I get started,

Kelsey, you've got this really awesome tour for the fellows, I am now learning that those things definitely do jive together. So can you talk about your experience? It's a question to both of you about the overlap between your STEM background and coming to work at the Library of Congress and how it kind of meshes and molds together.

Kelsey, you can go ahead just because I was talking. about your wonderful tour. >> Okay, all right. >> Sorry, I should be like tag team in. >> Okay. Yeah,

I felt the same way, thinking about, oh, the Library of Congress is one of the agencies that sponsors a fellow, like that's kind of random. I don't know what the role of someone with a STEM education background would be there because books,

history. Even though... though I've always been really passionate about the history of science. And that was one of kind of my focuses in my PhD program.

And so I didn't really get it until during the interviews, I got a little handout with the description of the position and I realized, oh wow, like someone with a STEM education background really is an asset because they have an entire profession.

learning outreach division that focuses on education and using the resources with K through 12 science students and teachers. And the Library of Congress holds everything.

So it's not just history or literature. Like it's everything, including all of the science, technology, math, the patents, everything.

So, yeah. I started to learn how important it is for them to also have someone like that STEM background voice to add to the conversation and to advocate and develop more resources for science teachers.

I think that is the beauty of the library. You go to a library, it has everything. And when you go to the nation's library, that every book, every-- every thing, if you open up a book,

it has the copyright of a Library of Congress. Everything goes through the Library of Congress. So it's just beautiful of all the things that are housed there as they relate to science, technology, engineering,

math, and even the arts. I had the opportunity to go to the music reading room and connect, is it Oscar? No, not Oscar. Roger's and Hammerstein had an opportunity to connect.

connect something from the sound of music to my farewell blog. So there's just opportunities to connect all collections to science and STEM and math and engineering.

I had the opportunity for me, I wanted to highlight it, the voices of African -American inventors and scientists. And at first glance, that was very difficult for me to find. So I had to look at some other collections.

collections and figure out how can I highlight the thing that I'm passionate about during my stay at the Library of Congress. And so I did that by looking at the pictures of the Tuskegee Airmen,

looked at the recipe of Rosa Parks, looked at some other images that highlighted African Americans, and then connected that to ice cream making in the science classroom.

So there's a lot that's at the Library of Congress that at first glance, someone might think like, that's kind of an opposite, but as I say, opposite is a track. And there's a lot at the library that you can spend that it connects to STEM.

And it gives you the opportunity for this fellowship to highlight that. That sounds incredible. What is a typical day like at the library of Congress?

Congress in in your role as a fellow? What and is there a typical day? But what you know, what what's a day in the life of a fellow who's who's placed at the Library of Congress?

For me, I would say that every day is different But usually I start my day. I'm lucky enough to walk to the library every day and go to my office.

office in the Madison building. And I start my day, check the emails, check the library's homepage, get distracted by whoever getting an award or the new blogs that have been posted 'cause each division has their own blog.

And yeah, usually I end up getting distracted by chronicling America a few times a day and thinking of, oh, I wonder what this is. have on this or this person and doing some searches and just working on my current projects,

meeting with my colleagues, informal coffee breaks with some of them. Like Kelsey, I don't think any day is ever the same. I mean, you do kind of get in that routine.

I think for me, the best day was the arrival and being able to look at the beautiful building and walking to the. tunnels and going to my office. That to me was the best part of the day,

walking into the building. Checking the blogs, connecting with colleagues, seeing if there's anything else that I need to check up on. If I'm leading something, my supporting something, I think for me,

I kind of got lost in the reading rooms. That was a lot of fun to be able to say, let me go to this room, let me go to this room, and-- and it's been a while, so the name of that re -room,

it may have been manuscripts. I think the first thing that I got lost in was I wanted to figure out who Albert Einstein was. Let me, if I'm in this fellowship, let me find what's in the Library of Congress,

and so that was one of the first things that I did. I kind of just got lost in manuscripts, finding more about Albert Einstein, and then kind of thinking about my own personal heroes, and if they had collections.

collections at the Library of Congress because, you know, when you're in that seat, you say, "Hey, I'm a fellow. Can I look at this?" Sure. And so that was fun being able to just say,

"Hey, I'm a fellow. Can I look at it?" Okay, let's see it. So it was nice to be able to see some of those special collections that are not often brought out for everybody,

but they're brought out for certain individuals. So that to me... that was fun. And I found time in my day to do that. - You get to play the fellow card at the Library of Congress.

- Yes. - That's cool. - You only do it for what, 11 months? You have to use that. - You have to use it. - For sure. I want that on a t -shirt that just says like,

"I'm a fellow, can I look at this?" I really enjoy that. that. So both of you are kind of talking about things that,

I mean, for better or worse, I'd like to think of it as better, but like just finding things at the Library of Congress and getting distracted and kind of like going down this rabbit hole and just like investigating things.

What has been the most interesting thing that you would say that you discovered at the Library of Congress? Library of Congress where you were like wow like that's so cool and I actually have access to this or I had no idea this was a thing.

Amar you want to start? Sure so I'm originally from Alabama and so I take pride in being an Alabamaan and so I just kind of came across these pictures about the Tuskegee Airmen.

And that really fascinated me as growing up about the Tuskegee Airmen living in Alabama. And then I saw these pictures and I'm like, cool. So then I started discovering who took the pictures.

Well, Tony Frazil took the pictures. Tony Frazil also took the pictures of John F. Kennedy at their wedding and just happened to be by chance during the World War II here,

taking pictures of the Tuskegee Airmen. And they-- are the only collection of pictures from the Tuskegee Airmen from Tony Brazell. And so that to me was fascinating to be able to discover that,

learn that, and I ended up writing a blog about the Tuskegee Airmen and how they connect and how I could connect or anyone could connect the Tuskegee Airmen to STEM in their classroom. So that for me was a collection that I really,

really enjoyed, and I talked about it. Rosa Parks And we know her to be from Alabama as well And if you look on the back, I think it's in her collection. She has a recipe of some pancakes and it's written on the back of an envelope so it's not anything like how many of us have you just taken like a Post -it note or a piece of paper and you just happen to just write random something on it but on this particular

back of an envelope it was the recipe her pancake recipe and and it's peanut butter pancakes, and so I had an opportunity to be able to connect her recipe to a blog teaching math with students,

and that was something I just really, really enjoyed, and at the time they had the Library of Congress had a collection that was coming out about Rosa Parks, and so it was nice to be able to add that blog to the display that they were doing.

on Rosa Park So for me if I just had to think those two it would be my favorite diving in the papers of Rosa Parks as well as The pictures and the research behind the photography of the tech Research and the photographer behind the Tuskegee Airmen Amara have you made those pancakes?

I'm not a cook cook. - Okay. - At the library, we had them one day. At the library, we had them one day, but they are phenomenal. (laughing) - That was when I was getting to you,

like, are they good? - No, but they're really good. I will say they are really, really good. I have had them. They are really good pancakes. - Nice. So we need to look for that blog post.

I need that recipe, it sounds like. - Yes, yes. - I love that. that's awesome. Kelsey, what would you say is like the most interesting,

crazy fill in the adjective thing that you have discovered and found? - Wow, that's a great question. There's so many cool things that they've shown us and just on all of the tours,

the manuscripts, we got to see like things from Einstein like his card when he... came to the United States and then in the rare book room like Robert Hook's original drawings from looking into the microscope.

I think one of the coolest things I found is like top of mind because writing a blog post on it but it was kind of pertaining to the discovery of X -rays.

So I love looking at Chronicling America just to see how the media has kind of portrayed these exciting new scientific discoveries and the potential of the applications.

And one of the things with X -rays was that they used to use them like I did with department stores to fit shoes exactly. So they would scan your foot and that's how you would know what shoe size.

and it's so interesting because you know that the ad is advertising like you are in danger of hurting your foot by wearing the wrong size shoe let's x -ray your foot to see what correct size shoe you are and then of course that was banned after they found and the dangers of radiation which there are more articles later on about that so I like kind of seeing how things change over time,

and it's really well documented in the library. Interestingly, Kelsey, we have one of those machines in a two -chloroscope in a collection of radiation and radioactive radioactivity.

We have a whole archive. We have a whole library of... artifacts from that time period. I'll have to send you guys a link to it afterward, but it's really interesting,

all of the items that are in the collection that we have, and that is one of them. And it's, yeah, it's a weird thing to look back on historically. But you know,

after radiation was discovered, like they used it for everything, not realizing that there comes a point where there's a lot. There's a little too much in the system,

right? Kelsey, starting with you, what is the, I guess, projects that you're working on specifically for the Library of Congress?

Is there a curriculum in the Library of Congress? Is there a, you know, specific project, or is it a bunch of things that you're working on for the Library of Congress?

Yeah, I have a few projects. One of them that's kind of ongoing is contributing to the blog, Teaching with the Library of Congress, and that's in researching different things,

like with what I saw with the x -ray articles and then coming up with teaching suggestions to publish in the blog. Another project is that I'm presenting at the NSTA conference in Denver and having developed a session that is using the primary sources,

kind of addressing the question, what does this source say about science science in a way that might challenge misconceptions about science and scientists? So I'm working on that presentation. - Amara,

talk about what kinds of projects you worked on when you were a fellow. - For me, there was a teacher and resident at the library when I was there and her focus was social studies.

So we had the opportunity to navigate and find how you can connect social studies and science together. And so-- so we created and worked on a couple of presentations where we presented how you can find science and social studies in the library.

I think about the history of making a Band -Aid. I think there's a picture book on it. And so we started with that picture book concept, looking at that Band -Aid and then bringing in some primary sources about that inventor and then the Band -Aid.

She talked about the history of how a Band -Aid was invented. And then I talked about the science portion of having wounds and healing. And so myself and the teacher and resident,

we did that while I was there. I also-- like I said, it was a passion of mine to highlight the voices of African -American inventors and how you can bring that into the STEM classroom.

So that was something that I focused on, as well as the blog posts that every Einstein fellow considered. to. You also have the opportunity to leave as a published author if you're not already one.

I had the opportunity to write in the NSTA-- what was that? Magazine, or lack of a better word-- the NSTA magazine. We had the opportunity to write articles.

And so I had the opportunity to write two articles for NSTA. And that was an accomplishment to be able to say at the end of-- of this fellowship, I published something that someone beyond home had the opportunity to read.

So y 'all stay busy during your fellowships for sure. Oh yes. If you're at the Library of Congress, we're working, exploring, researching, having fun. There are a lot of things to do as it was stated.

You kind of think Library of Congress, how does this work and how does it match? It really is a unique placement. a unique pairing where you have the opportunity to kind of see the best of both worlds.

So that the Library of Congress you're not really a heel fellow, but you do have the opportunity to be exposed to some of the things that happen on the heel as well as being able to enjoy the Library of Congress and being able to go to the reading rooms.

Kelsie talked about some of the awards. the things the Gershwin Prize that you have, the Golden Goose Egg Award. So there's a lot of fun things that you have an opportunity to do at the Library of Congress.

So it's not our work. There's some fun. What does sound like a fun place to be? That's very cool. I guess I never thought about it as being like,

you're so close to the hill. So you get that action of the hill. But if like not your jam, not saying yes or no for you, whatever that is, you get to kind of have like a step back.

Like that's someone else's responsibility, that's not mine. That's very cool. - It is, it is. And I had the opportunity to cohort that I was with, we were very close. And so it was nice to be able to say,

okay, you all wanna come have lunch at the Library of Congress, lunch at the Library of Congress is like a big deal if you live in D. .C. On the sixth floor, the cafeteria is very nice.

Or I would hop over to the hill and go hang out and see one of their offices, explore what their work life is, 'cause it really is an opportunity to explore as you are a fellow.

And so I have the opportunity to be able to stay at the Library of Congress, but as well, maybe have lunch with a fellow. A fellow. at their placement. Yeah, that's so cool.

So, Amara, as a fellow emeritus, so to speak, you mentioned your cohort. Do you,

and I know during your fellowship, you're really close, you spend a lot of time together, you do professional development activities together, you do fun activities together. Are you still in contact with your cohort members?

I mean, do you sort of become like leadership, you know, Albert Einstein Fellowship, like best class ever sort of thing where-- - We are the best class. (laughing) All right,

so I won't tell you that, but I'll say that, I hope you understand what I mean. But the fellows, my cohort is the best cohort. (laughing) Oh, you were it. only nine of us,

and so the nine of us became naturally organically very close. We still communicate to this day. We are each other's champions, and so the fellowship talks about being in the arena and cheering on each other.

We truly are each other's cheerleaders. We communicate all the time. One of our fellows are working on the doctoral degree. She sent us the link. You know. know, we're gonna be there We're gonna support Another fellow she'll give us updates on policy somewhere going on in her area Letting us know what's going on somebody celebrated a birthday yesterday.

We're like happy birthday Hope we can all get together soon But so I will say for my group We truly are friends and we truly are each other's champions not just in the fellowship But outside of the fellowship too too.

And so having the nine of us, we created this cozy family. The fellowship has Twitter chats. We would all meet at someone's house. Someone would cook.

It was not me, but someone did cook. So we would - -Rose Park pancakes for all. -Yes. We would, you know, have a meal together and we would sit there and we would entertain the text.

I mean, I mean, entertain the Twitter chat. And that was just fun, but we're always like that. We have this thing where we call find a fellow. And so when a fellow goes to someone's city, they'll connect with them, take a picture,

and put it in the group thread. And so it's kind of a fun banter that we have with each other. We used to sit around this can of spam all the time. I'm not sure who has it now,

but definitely to find a fellow game and our connection with each other, it really is a fun banter. has superseded beyond the fellowship. Kelsey being in the fellowship now I guess talks similarly about you know you spend so much time you know yes at the Library of Congress but also with your other fellows do you anticipate those relationships continuing you know after your fellowship.

is over? - I definitely do. It's nice to have a group of people who are going through the same thing as you, especially I moved from Florida to DC.

You know, I don't have any family, I didn't know anybody up here. So having like this built -in friendship and support group is, it was really important for me to have that.

And, And I don't know if I can speak for Amy, but I will definitely be continuing to try to be in contact with her after the fella. That's the right answer. Thank you. If you were going to be like,

no, like our cohort, I don't know if I really feel that way. We might need to do some heavy editing on this podcast. Worst cohort ever. But I think it's the joy of the fellowship,

though. Michael, you have the opportunity to meet people from across the nation, and you all have different backgrounds, but you find this hub in DC because of the fellowship, and you begin to share your personal story,

like what brought you here? - Right. - You know, what is gonna be the thing that helps sustain us, 'cause some people, they do come by themselves. Some come with families, some come with spouses, partners, but when you come from across the world to be able to do...

this fellowship and to be able to help feel your own personal cup, 'cause sometimes that's what you need, but also to expand your voice on a national level.

And I think that's the joy of the fellowship. - I love it, and that makes a whole lot of sense that you get, you know, to meet people from different perspectives,

and it gives different parts of the countries. So, you know, you get to broaden your horizons and, you know, kind of break out of your comfort zone,

so to speak, you know, which really moving to D .C. from wherever you are in the country, you know, is a whole other level of-- - That is a whole other level,

trying to figure out the metro system. That is different and walking everywhere. I did not have a vehicle. So navigating the metro,

walking everywhere. I mean, it's a whole thing, but it really is a part of the fellowship that makes for me, it was fun. It was fun navigating how to get on a metro. It was fun.

I fell in love with baseball. I grew up in the south. There's only one sport. That's football. Right. I fell in love with baseball. The Nationals won the World Championship while I was there. And I'm still continuing to be a Nats fan. So I think that's the joy of exploring a new city while also being able to connect with others.

I love that. And also just too, like what I have found as part of my fellowship is just meeting people from across the country who have vastly different teaching experiences than you.

I was talking to one of our fellows the other day who taught in a super rural district and hearing her say things like, this is what happens at my school and my response being like,

what? And then me saying, this is what happens in New York City schools and her being like, what? And just kind of the like back and forth and sharing of experiences has made me such a more...

well rounded educator and allowed me to like break out of my bubble in that I've taught a lot of different places but always in urban settings,

never in rural. So really, even though I'm in DC, another urban setting, I'm still learning so much about rural education. So that wealth of diversity in your cohort is can't be over it's been really excellent.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. And that's the beauty of the fellowship, being able to connect with others. And as you talked about someone teaching in New York versus teaching in rural Alabama or urban Tennessee is where I am right now is probably very different than urban New York.

Definitely. Yeah. You know, to share in the experiences of being an educator and talking about those struggles that we all face. face and then figuring out, okay, it's not how do we overcome this and how do we continue to advocate for all educators while we're in this platform and in the fellowship?

- For sure. So we have, oh, go ahead, Michael. - Sorry, I was just gonna say, Amara, you're a principal in Chattanooga now. Was that becoming a principal a result of the fellowship accepted to you?

is that what you took back? Or did you not anticipate that at all? - I did not anticipate that at all,

at all at all. So I was the COVID year of the fellowship. And around this time last year, as we all know in, what was it, 2020, life shut down.

And so as the fellowship likes to climb, say we all had to pivot and so life had to pivot It was not my initial plan to return back to Chattanooga I wanted to stay in DC.

It was I mean I was thriving. I was vibing and I was not coming back to the south But I had a job back some and back home and so I went here I came back home.

Let me go back a little bit. Jill always said who helps with the fellowship. Jill's a project manager and she said still stay in contact with home. I didn't want to do that,

but I did. And because I stayed in contact with home when I came back, I was kind of saying I wanted to be the director of STEM for the entire district. This is what it's going to be. But once again,

it was COVID. No one's really knowing what's going on in life and we're not spending money. So because of the fellowship, I had the opportunity to come back and they placed me as an assistant principal with no administration decree.

Oh, I had-- (laughing) - Surprise. - Surprise. But my district put me into another fellowship program at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville where I did work to get my administration degree.

And I believe and I know that only-- happened because of the experience I had at the fellowship. They knew that I had the experience to be able to step from the fellowship and then enter into an assistant principal role while earning my administration degree.

And so I was an assistant principal for two years. I'm in my second year of being a principal at a middle school in the same district that I didn't think I was returning to. But I know that was because because of the Einstein Fellowship.

The Fellowship also had me to write every day and I don't like to write. I'm also finishing my dissertation, which is what, nothing but writing. The skills that I learned in the Fellowship were directly from,

skills I learned in the Fellowship helped me what I'm doing right now in the job. - So what did you originally hope to take back?

to the classroom or to your community? I guess, initially, you thought you weren't coming back, you were... I was not, and I really enjoyed working at the Library of Congress,

so I enjoyed the mix of... So, what I did at the library, I had the opportunity to work at the library, but I also did some outreach within the library. I missed the classroom, but still liked the work.

So, I had a fan... classrooms to go and to explore while I was in DC and teach some primary sources lessons with the students. So I wanted whatever that job was that allowed me to still work at the Library of Congress,

but still be connected to the classroom. That's the thing that I wanted to do. And even when people ask me what's my dream job, I'm like, that is my dream job to still be connected with a library or a library.

-traditional educational institution and be able to connect those things to students while still highlighting STEM and giving opportunities for students of color and exposing them to STEM and the opportunities that await them by going that route.

- Right. Kelsey, what do you hope to take back to your classroom, to your community when... your fellowship ends? And I know you're at like the midpoint now,

so there's a bit of time, but. - Yeah, there's a lot of experiences and knowledge I've gained just through being with DC.

One of them is understanding kind of how education works all over the country, because we have these different fellows, as Amy was saying, in all different school settings and understanding that. (upbeat music) them talk about what's successful and ideas I may have never thought of for like a school that I work at,

but it works great for them. So maybe I could transfer back some of those things. And then also just like the vast amount of resources that the library has. I came from a STEM focused high school and the library has so many opportunities for scientists there.

there, they have the preservation lab, they have a digital imaging lab, so students who are taking AP art or like AP chemistry or even like any level of those classes could apply for internships to be able to be in the room of those labs and and work on projects.

So there's just all the opportunities that I've learned from being here. I'd want to take that back to my community. and share that with those students. - So we have our interviews coming up this weekend,

which is truly wild to me. If you could give one piece of advice to people that are considering applying for the fellowship,

what would you say to them? And Amara, we can start with you, I guess. - It's not just one thing, Amy. So I'm gonna try to limit it to two. - Well,

you can only say one. No, I'm just kidding. - No, I'm just kidding. - Be your authentic self. Be who you, I brought Amara to the fellowship and I think I may connect with Amara.

with the Library of Congress because of that. So going into an interview, you sometimes like to hide who you are and show your best self as anyone should.

But the fellowship is hard work. And you're going to have some rough days. So being your authentic self allows others to know who you are and how they can support you.

When you give that-- facade, no one is able to really know who you are and you are creating a match appearing for 11 months.

You want to be your authentic self so that they can authentically match you at the right placement. So that's what I would say to someone. Be your authentic self and have fun.

That word has been coming up a lot. lot. Kelsey, what are you thinking about? Yeah, similar to Amara,

being who you are is so important. I would not have thought that the Library of Congress is where I fit in, but it's the perfect and it's the best placement. And yeah,

I could not see it any other way, even though applying, I had a very different vision of where I would might be working and what I might be doing. So definitely be yourself and also just know what you bring to the table,

be prepared to explain that, maybe practice it in the mirror. Don't let all the other kind of accomplishments, awards of everybody else in the room with you kind of dim your own confidence because you've done amazing things too.

Just know that and know how to share the them with people. And I think that that would be the advice I'd give. - So just following up on that Kelsey, when you got the fellowship,

did you have a different vision? It sounds like you had a different vision of where you might be placed or where you wanted to be placed. But it sounds like you found the perfect,

you were placed exactly where you needed to be. be, as they say. Yes, it's true. I mean, I think when you, when you apply,

just me, when I think of Washington, D .C., I thought of the Capitol building and I thought of running around the hill and offices and all of those things. That was like my vision, but I,

yeah, I guess just expanding that to not understanding there are so many. different federal agencies who do importance them education work. And I'm glad that that's right. How about you similar.

I would say the same. I walked in with a couple of interviews at two different placements and really one at the other placement. And I was excited when I got the call to be an Einstein fellow and then even more excited when I realized the Library of Congress.

I have matched with. with them. Yeah I can say it's one of those things where you really didn't expect it but it really was the best pairing the best match for me and I really enjoyed working with my colleagues and as I transitioned into the fellow I was a second fellow at the at the Library of Congress the first fellow the original Dr.

Kelly Taylor she really helped in the transition. and so it was helpful to be able to connect with the former fellow as I transitioned into the fellowship for my year.

So something that I'm noticing just going through these podcasts is that it's not everyone, but a lot of us, myself included, have that or had,

I guess, that vision of, if we would. were to get into the fellowship, we would be, I like your phrasing Kelsey of like, or maybe some more, I'm sorry, I don't remember who said it, but running around the hill, like Capitol Hill and like going to different offices.

And I think that's what, I mean, if we continue this trend of like 90 % of people having that image, I think a lot of people are going to continue to have that image.

So no one asked for my advice, but I going to give it anyway, about this idea of try to expand that mindset. Again, I'm just realizing right now that a lot of us have that specific image,

but I'm hoping with this podcast, we can kind of work to give people the opportunity to see what other placements would look like. And another trend I'm seeing is everyone's has said I feel like I ended up exactly where I need to be so this is like also a humbling moment too of like we all have this like path in life like I'm envisioning this but then something else happens and it's like oh this is actually better

so I don't I don't know just something I'm thinking about I'll stop now oh you can go Michael no go ahead go ahead tomorrow no but when I think of like for my cohort we all had that conversation conversation.

I think there might have been one or two that got like their first pick. And I think that's very rare that it's like, okay, I got my pick at being at the Capitol or I got my pick of being Card Rock.

I think we all kind of had this vision of, as you said, running around the hill, doing something, but then we got something else. So I think about the classroom. We all envision our classrooms to be, you know, exciting,

wonderful, all the kids are gonna listen to what they wanna do. do. But then something happens. And then you find another teachable moment. And then that explores a different pathway. And so I think when you don't get that what you thought it was,

it becomes a teachable moment. And you get to have a lot of teachable moments in the months that you are an Einstein fellow, and you explore so much more.

So if I was where I wanted to be, I probably would not have explored as much. as I did because I was somewhere that I didn't want to be and I needed to explore and figure out what exactly I was doing in this role and how I could be an asset to my agency.

For me, I think my vision of where I wanted to be changed drastically after the interviews meeting with all of our amazing colleagues at the library. library, I could feel, you can just tell when,

you know, you vibe with people, and that was my experience there. So like, I just, I was really excited to hear that call, and that was the one that I was looking for.

Awesome. Is there anything that we haven't talked about, about the Library of Congress, that you want to end your fellowships that we want to make?

sure that we cover before we kinda wrap things up. - The Library of Congress is a special place. It's so much more than the beautiful building and the books,

the manuscripts. It is a utopia. And you have the opportunity to explore that at each and every day and the people.

that work at the Library of Congress are the smartest that I've met and come with a wealth of knowledge and are open to sharing that wealth of knowledge.

So if you have the privilege of working at the Library of Congress, you're in conversations with individuals who are just, just know things. Like, I think of Dana,

who works at the Library of Congress, who just knows. things. Mike, who just knows things. Cheryl, who just knows things. But beyond that, the other individuals, I think about Miss Adrienne, who curated the Rosa Parks exhibit,

she just knew things. And it was an honor to be able to sit there and just listen to her. She talked about Rosa and her life. And so that's what's special about the Library of Congress.

There's just wealth of knowledge with people, but it is a beautiful place. to be able to walk into every day and have this sense of joy that you get the opportunity to dive into this collection and meet with the individuals that work there every day.

It brings me joy in even talking about the colleagues and having the opportunity to say I was an Albert Einstein fellow. fellow at the Library of Congress.

That's pretty cool. That is pretty cool. And while you're naming off a list of people that you love at the Library of Congress, we'd be remiss if you didn't mention Connie,

right? Yes. It's who you mentioned just for listeners. You were talking about this before we started recording. Yeah. Yes, Connie is a-- is a wonderful employee,

volunteer, individual person at the Library of Congress and every fellow that I have met prior to me talked about how I needed to meet her.

And so when I had the opportunity to meet Miss Connie, she gives you this box of cookies that are delicious and not everyone knows these are your your cookies.

Now I want to share those cookies, I will, which I did. She makes you cookies and then she takes you on a tour and I had the wonderful honor of taking a backstage tour of the Library of Congress going kind of through the life of a book,

going up through the main reading room. If you've ever been in the main reading room, not everybody has access to that. And so we walked up the, I call it the chute of the middle of the Library of Congress at the app.

to walk up there and view where the National Treasure Movie was filmed. So there are wonderful people at the Library, wonderful things to do and explore at the Library.

Ms. Connie, she's definitely at the top of the list, at the top of the list. And my mentor, Leigh Ann, who is phenomenal, who as I've still left the Library of Congress,

she still has given opportunities to me that I've definitely enjoyed. enjoyed, had opportunity to interview Jason Reynolds, who was a YA author. So, shout out to Leigh Ann. Kelsey,

how about for you anything by way of kind of wrap up? Yeah, just to add to what Amara said, the library is such a beautiful place and it's so full of knowledge.

And I think it's also important to mention that it's not just a library, for Congress. It's not just for historians, PhD researchers, authors. It is for everyone. Any 16 -year -old with an ID can go and get their library card.

I encourage everyone to do it. Just sign up online and go. But even if you can't be in person, if you're halfway around the world, there are so many things digitized and so many ongoing digitization projects to just expand the reach and access.

for all types of information that someone might be researching. So I feel really proud to be like affiliated with the institution in any way just because they do so much to make sure that everyone has access to the information that's stored at the library and it's not just like an exclusive place that you know you can only get if you have certain credentials.

In Kelsey I don't recall the name but it's the Library for the Blind and Deaf. It's the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled. So we have that entire program that's also making sure that those people can get access to the books.

They have like braille readers for people to come in and use and that program has been available since like the mid 20th century.

And there are pictures of blind airmen listening to books and reading books on Braille. So that's just like one part of the library that helps in that aspect.

- All right, last question for everybody. And Amara, you touched on this a little bit. What brings you joy? joy? - Oh,

that went a little deep, Michael. What brings me joy? Making others happy. We work in a really hard profession. And in the seat that I sit in,

it is really hard to keep teacher morale up. So when I can walk down the hallway and know that there's teacher laughter, they're smiling, they're happy. It brings me joy when others are happy.

- Excellent, I like that. Kelsey, how about for you? - Yeah, well, what brings me joy kind of as related to the fellowship too,

and just supporting teachers and students, for me, I'm able to do that when I find something that is really interesting, really cool that I can just see having,

an impact on students when being used in the classroom. And maybe they'll think of a concept in a different way or they'll say, oh, like I never thought that I could be a scientist at the Library of Congress.

I was just interested in art, but here are all these opportunities. So I think that brings me joy kind of in in sharing these opportunities with teachers and students.

- Awesome. How about for you, Amy? - So on the first podcast that we did, I talked about finding joy in the familiar and the unfamiliar,

and I had such a wonderful experience with that last week. The fellowship, fellowship was well through the support of the fellowship I was able to travel to Anchorage Alaska for a tech conference there and when I was there I met two educators from Brooklyn New York which is where my home base is one of them who grew up about two blocks away from where I live and the other one just like a mile from where I live and

it was so amazing to be I actually calculated the farthest away from home that I've ever been and find two neighbors at the conference, which was so cool.

And to talk about teaching and like how our Brooklyn experience translates to this very different experience being in Alaska. So that is what's bringing me joy this week.

But Michael, what is bringing me joy this week? joy? We haven't, you haven't shared on our podcast. What brings you joy? Well, actually kind of related to this conversation. There,

I love podcasts, of course, as a podcast host, I listen to a lot of other podcasts. And the Sunday Sitdown podcast with Willie Geist, who is on the Today Show, and his guest this week is Cheryl Lee Ralph from Abbott Elementary,

and she talks about the importance of representation in education, the importance of, and the value of teachers and how underappreciated educators are and how underpaid educators are for the work that you all do and and the importance of the job that you all have,

you know, teaching our young people and educating them and, you know, all of that. So that brings me joy and being able to sort of say out loud that we need to pay teachers more for what they do.

Yes, yes, yes. Right? And principles and, you know, I mean... mean, it's, yeah, it's almost criminal on some level how underpaid educators are for the work that they do and the importance of the job that you all have.

So, there I said it, I don't care because it matters. I mean,

you know, I think I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for the educators who poured their heart and soul into their work so that I would benefit from it and,

you know, fall in love with reading and writing and storytelling to be able to be the storyteller that I am today. So the long way around to say... say, "Shirley Ralph brings me a great deal of joy." A great answer.

In general. And her, when she won the Emmy for Abbott Elementary, I just urge everyone to go online and look for it. But what she says to people in the audience and to young women in particular about their value is,

you know, epically. important, so there you have it. That's what's bringing me joy today. - So love it, love it. - All right, well,

ladies, thank you so much for spending this time with me today. Literally, we could talk for hours about the Albert Einstein Fellowship and the great work that you're doing as fellows.

And Amaro, you know, he's... know, kind of life beyond the fellowship and what you're doing in Chattanooga. And we're just a couple of hours away. So I might come down and do my own find a fellow.

And (laughs) - Hey, please so you can join our, you will be able to join the best cohorts group chat. - Ooh, wow. Yeah, there's lots of pretty words. We need to get off this, right?

Ugh, before it gets messy. (laughs) - Right. - Hey, definitely ask. Beth she'll see if you ask her hey who's the best Einstein fellowship group she'll say I don't know what our cohort number is but she'll let you know it's up.

She'll let you know. That would be bold. That would be bold if her. I am that confident Amy. I'm really impressed. This is how you got to be a principal. That confidence.

Well thank you so much. It's been awesome being able to let you know it's up. with you all today. It's been great. So thank you for having me today. So glad to do it. Ladies, thank you so much and have a great rest of your day.

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