

Newly Established Non-Profit Private School Axis Aims to Diversify L.A. Private Schools

Description



Collette Bowers Zinn

I was a guest on the [Motherbird](#) podcast a few months ago and was asked who in the L.A. private school world I would love to meet. One name immediately came to mind: Collette Bowers Zinn, daughter of legendary [Center for Early Education](#) head of school Reveta Bowers, and founder of the new nonprofit [Private School Axis](#).

I was able to meet Bowers Zinn for an outdoor lunch recently, where we discussed her plans for increasing diversity in private school admissions. With 15 years of experience in school administration and admissions, this lawyer-turned-educator is passionate, focused and brimming with ideas for how to make these private schools more inclusive. She exudes warmth and a sense of humor, but also has a personal connection to this issue—“as a mom of two kids who attend L.A. private schools, she knows firsthand the importance of diversifying these schools. This is one of the reasons she founded Private School Axis in 2020.

Private School Axis is a nonprofit organization [in partnership with L.A. area private schools](#) with the goal of increasing racial and ethnic diversity by helping families of color with all aspects of the application process. Once accepted, the relationship does not end there—Private School Axis assists families with the transition to private school and helps them navigate the school experience throughout the year. This is a first-of-its kind, comprehensive model rooted in a relational, community-building, service-oriented approach. Private School Axis creates a bridge between communities of color and independent schools by:

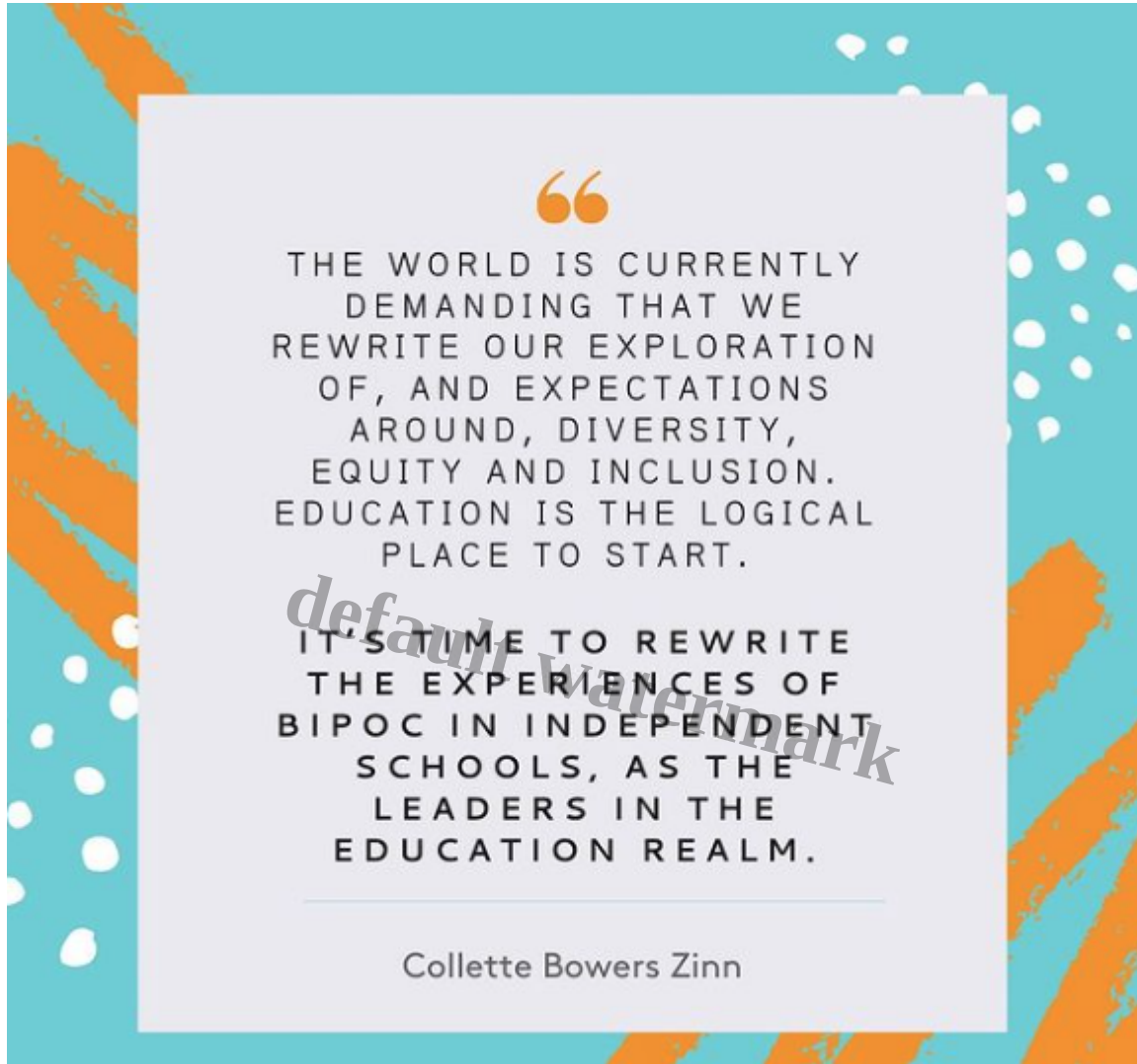
- 1) Helping under-served families of color navigate the school selection, admission, and enrollment process
- 2) Recruiting, placing, and supporting educators of color in schools
- 3) Providing professional development to schools around diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), including a defined accreditation process

Bowers Zinn said she is proud to announce the first cohort of Private School Axis families is hard at work on their admissions process and will apply during the 2021-22 year. Families can apply to a maximum of 5 schools for grades K-10 and will be assisted with understanding educational models (progressive, developmental and traditional), financial aid, and how to select the best school for their child. The cost is \$75.00 and fee waivers are available.

Private schools often wait for families of color to apply, which explains the lack of underserved applicants of color at some schools. Bowers Zinn said she plans to change that.

“Private School Axis is going into communities whose zip codes are not represented in L.A. private schools to encourage families to apply,” she said. “It’s a proactive approach.”

The work Bowers Zinn, her board of directors and partner schools are doing is not only important, but timely, especially given today’s environment. Because of the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black@schoolname movement on Instagram, private schools around the nation are focused on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. For some schools, this work is not new. For others, it is something they have neglected for too long and are now scrambling to address in order to make up for lost time.



Unfortunately, there has been vocal backlash from white parents who do not want DEI plans implemented. At some schools, parents object to the term “white privilege” being discussed in the classroom or at school assemblies because they believe it makes their kids uncomfortable. At other schools, parents are fighting curriculum changes and challenging reading lists. These private schools are hardly bastions of radical change. However, even the slightest efforts towards creating a more inclusive environment are being met with anger and attempts to undermine progress. Bowers Zinn pointed out that fortunately, there are schools where DEI is part of who they are, so these concepts are being embraced by the school communities. Of course, there is always more that can be done in the area of diversity, but some schools are way ahead of others on this front.

As the debate over DEI rages at some of L.A.’s most prestigious private schools, Bowers Zinn believes that misunderstanding is driving the tension.

“Schools must examine who they are and where they are with DEI,” she said. “It’s about community examination and exploration. Not blame or shame or negativity.”

Private School Axis is focused on access and healthy environments at schools. The organization knows the data shows that diversity leads to better outcomes for everyone. Because the world is multi-cultural,

Private School Axis believes people of different backgrounds must learn to work together.

As if Bowers Zinn isn't busy enough, she co-hosts a wonderful podcast, *Eraced*, with Lisa Johnson, co-founder of Private School Village. I love listening because these two women can get serious one minute and laugh the next. They also have fantastic guests who bring unique and expert perspectives to the show. The two episodes on DEI are a must-listen—timely, informative and exactly what I needed to hear right now.

Collette Bowers Zinn is the founder of [Private School Axis](#). She holds a B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, a J.D. from the University of Southern California and an M.Ed from Pepperdine University. She is a graduate of Harvard-Westlake School and has 15 years of experience in L.A. private school administration, including at Brentwood School and Wildwood School. Bowers Zinn is also the founder of [Zinn Education Management](#) which offers parent education, tutoring, application support and DEI consulting for schools. She is the mom of two kids who attend L.A. private schools.

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