



Princeton Club of Rochester
Isha Ali
Senior, Fairport High School

“You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated.”

- - Maya Angelou

As a Black woman and a Muslim, Isha has faced many barriers. But she perseveres. She knows that she must be fearless and steadfast.

Isha ran for Treasurer of the Black Student Union at Fairport High School in the fall. She didn't win. In the face of defeat, many of us would give up, walk away, or move on to other things. Not Isha. She jumped in with passion, serving as a pillar among students in the fight for racial equity.

In the words of Dr. Ernest Crocker, Fairport's Community Engagement Specialist and Black Student Union advisor: *“Isha's voice was not hushed. She continues to be one of the strongest supporters of the BSU. She leads without a title and is a champion for change.”*

Isha says the BSU is one vehicle she knew could be a catalyst. She has not only participated in numerous events to promote acceptance, understanding and awareness, but was instrumental in planning and presenting Fairport's first-ever BSU Summit on racial issues. She says, *“I know I can't change the country's whole view on racism and people of color, but I want to make changes even if they're small ones.”*

Dr. Crocker adds that Isha consistently advocates for herself and other students who encounter racial bias in and out of school. He says, *“She has faithfully contended for racial equity in Fairport as a voice for all students who face inequity because of their race.”*

Isha, your advocacy is having a greater impact than you know. Never give up. You are already making a positive difference in our world. Bravo.



Princeton Club of Rochester

Daniela Filmore

Junior, Webster Thomas High School

“There is nothing more beautiful than someone who goes out of their way to make life beautiful for others” -- Mandy Hale

To advocate for equity and create meaningful change requires passion, dedication and perseverance. Daniela Filmore adds another quality to that list: being *selfless*. The ability to give, help, and care is evident in all she does.

At Webster Thomas, Daniela works in the school’s DREAM club to raise awareness of racial bias and help others celebrate their diverse cultures and races. She contributes to the Hispanic Heritage celebration, to Black Art and Poetry events, and to charity drives. She describes her participation in the Roc2Change Annual Summit on Race as transformative:

“No one judges anyone, and we were all friends with one another. We can talk about as young people how we can better the world from racial conflicts we have been facing.”

Daniela is also a member of the Titan Service Scholars organization, which travels to the Dominican Republic to help struggling families with insufficient housing. While working alongside other scholars to help build and improve workers’ homes, Daniela describes witnessing the poor treatment of the sugar cane laborers, which inspired her to write:

“We are humans, not things, and we all deserve respect from others...if we all push individually to make a difference in our community, (we) can become really impactful and you’ll be happy for what you have done.”

School Counselor and advisor Anthony Raymond says Daniela is always looking to help fellow students and staff members in any way she can. He adds,

“Dani is one of the most selfless students I have met. She demonstrates equality in her daily activities and exhibits it with how she conducts herself with her peers as well as with staff. She is a well-respected member of our club.”

Daniela, we hope that you will keep selflessly encouraging others and helping create racial harmony in this world. Onward!



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Liya Kulmametova

Junior, Thomas Edison High School, Elmira

“A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.” -- John Maxwell

Liya is an exchange student from Kazakhstan spending this year at Thomas Edison High School in Elmira, which makes her Princeton Prize application both unique and extraordinary. Championing race relations requires a dynamic, dedicated and fearless leader to drive its success, and Liya is a powerhouse for change -- working both here and at home in Kazakhstan to fight inequities of racism and bias.

At Thomas Edison High School, Liya took the reins in organizing talks on homelessness and protecting marginalized groups. She led discussions promoting racial equity, community inclusion and awareness of structural barriers. Describing how she has promoted understanding and genuine learning, Liya says:

“I encourage my peers to share personal experiences and reflect on systemic discrimination. One impactful moment was when a student shared their struggles with racial prejudice in the classroom, which deepened our collective awareness and inspired others to be more conscious of bias in everyday interactions.”

In Kazakhstan, Liya has been working with the homeless population, where many are marginalized and face discrimination on housing applications and employment. The experience of seeing a man lose his home due to racial profiling, says Liya, *“pushed me to advocate for more inclusive community support by raising awareness among other volunteers and encouraging greater outreach efforts.”*

Teacher and mentor Almira Kuandykova says Liya’s impact is significant: *“She approaches every task with thoughtfulness and determination, ensuring that her actions create lasting, positive change. Liya’s ability to connect with others, her commitment to social justice, and her passion for creating inclusive spaces are qualities that set her apart as a leader dedicated to making a real difference.”*

Keep leading the way, Liya. Our world needs more like you.



Princeton Club of Rochester
OlaRose Ndubuisi
Senior, Pittsford Mendon High School

“The sacrifices of her ancestors allow her to take flight. The sun is her inheritance, and she was made to glitter and glow.” -- from “The Golden Hour of a Black Girl” by OlaRose Ndubuisi

OlaRose’s own words capture the brilliance of her work to promote racial equity. But she extends her invitation to all people. As a new student at Pittsford Mendon High School, OlaRose revived and invigorated the struggling Black Student Union, doubling its membership and tripling attendance at meetings and events. Harnessing the city mayor, state legislators and other prominent figures to speak on subjects of race is no small accomplishment, but OlaRose knows how powerful a positive and inclusive community can be:

“Uniting black students and engaging allies can have an overlooked impact on the climate and culture at a school. A student can feel empowered to stand up for themselves. Students may feel encouraged to support one another, or someone may be inspired to act kinder due to the positivity and unity that a Black Student Union fosters.”

OlaRose is also uniquely gifted at articulating racial issues and needs. She is the 2024-2025 New York State Youth Poet Laureate. At the NYC Poetry Festival in July 2024, she recited her poem, “The Golden Hour of a Black Girl”, quoted above, which is about self-love and pride. She is the co-editor of her school literary magazine and a writer for numerous publications. Her words, capturing the essence of racial biases, struggles and successes, reveal a young woman wise beyond her years.

Her advocacy for racial equity extends beyond race, to other forms of marginalization including those with disabilities. She is one of only 25 youth in the country honored in 2024 with the Prudential Emerging Visionaries award for her work on scoliosis awareness -- and she is the founder and president of a school club extended to those with a wide range of physical differences. This intersectionality of causes highlights the breadth of OlaRose’s passion and commitment. Her recommender, teacher Kathryn Curtis, agrees:

“OlaRose is so incredibly organized and persuasive that she has made space for students from marginalized groups. While the BSU is geared towards black students, it also attracts other allies. (She) is an incredible leader, but also keen to empower others.”

OlaRose is a champion grappling not only with race-related inequities, but with the many inequities that divide us. She is fearless, and her advocacy for the betterment of all is at the core of what this world desperately needs. You are a remarkable young woman, OlaRose, with a very bright future. Onward!