



# YOUNG GIFTED AND BLACK

A photo gallery of **Success**



PORTLAND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*"Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world."*

**Harriet Tubman**

Our Young, Gifted & Black tribute celebrates outstanding Black students who have inspired us by defying stereotypes through their successes, achievements and leadership. Congratulations to our honorees and to their parents and family members, and to the teachers with whom they built their success.

**Carole Smith**

Superintendent

Portland Public Schools



## Shatoya Allen

Grade 9  
Young Women's  
Leadership  
Academy at  
Harriet Tubman

a loyal friend faithful student  
Shatoya has discovered  
her own super powers  
once shy now a recognized leader  
once socially challenged  
now a favorite at sleepovers

she used to act out to get attention  
now she gets attention  
by being authentic  
witty charming sweet  
smart articulate engaged  
her enthusiasm is infectious

she sparkles radiance self-assurance  
revealing the process of possibility  
as when a caterpillar emerges  
from a cramped cocoon  
spreads her wings and flies

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

an only child, Mekai  
is singular in his dreams  
his razor sharp focus  
cuts away all distractions  
a mini LeBron James in the making  
bringing the Heat even when wet  
dunking on the showerhead I'm told  
yeah Mekai is dripping with potential  
a natural leader he follows the rules  
solving problems in math and life  
he is kind to classmates  
helpful to his teacher  
loving to parents  
the best yard worker  
a grandmother could ever want  
is there anything Mekai doesn't do well  
if so, nobody's figured out what that is yet  
whether behind a desk or behind in points  
smiling Mekai always plays to win  
swish - he scores  
naturally



**Mekai  
Anderson**  
Kindergarten  
Beach PK-8 School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



**Nohealani  
(Lani)  
Bannister**

Grade 7  
Astor K-8 School

Nohealani is quite mature  
She really has a big heart  
Self-motivation also sets her apart

When it comes to schoolwork  
Lani's always on her game  
The honor roll is regularly listing her name

In sports, she's a leader  
On stage, she's a star  
Prompting standing ovations  
And mouths left ajar

As a writer, she goes above and beyond  
This young lady's heart, mind, integrity  
Are all equally strong

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

leader

learner

an inquisitive eager mind

curious

confident

excellent communicator

eager artist

sketching promise

she exudes positivity

an aspiring ballerina

she moves gracefully

within between among

a positive role model

past present future

star



## Jada Commodore

Grade 5  
Chief Joseph  
PK-5 School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



**Joseph**

**Dessou**

Grade 11

Franklin High  
School

self disciplined

he knows when to work

when to have fun

when to rest

whether playing soccer

or playstation3

doing homework

or doing chores

watching movies or

laughing out loud

Joseph gives his all

to the moment

his talent has no limit

leadership is innate

politeness is an art

like any engineer

he knows how

to design success

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

it is said that kindness is  
more compelling than knowledge  
compassion offers more comfort  
than a word of wisdom

an extended hand at the right time  
can exude the depth of one's humanity  
nourish a desperate plea for love  
with an earnest full-mouthed smile

Hannah has a precious combination  
equally wise and warmhearted  
like a muse waiting for invitation  
a paint stroke that brings completion

peers say she is a champion of peace  
she spreads kindness on wings that  
flutter not for the sake of movement  
but to guide us to places we want to be



## Hannah Dressa

Grade 8  
Mt. Tabor Middle  
School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Sekai Edwards

Grade 8  
DaVinci Arts  
Middle School

eloquent and talented  
compelled and engaging

Sekai's divine artistry  
names and creates

"Change"

"Making Change"

inspiring change

an intense 12 minutes of art

an imagined exchange of words

weaved with appropriate complexity

identifies our inadequacies

forces participation

in our shared reality

gives what is unresolved

a necessary context

incites a response

that can - ultimately

change

a mind

a life

our silence

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

if you are wise enough  
you don't have to taste defeat  
to know what you don't want  
so Breah runs from failure  
as hard as she sprints toward success

she makes conscious choices  
of what not to be  
pushes herself to prevail  
disperse any clouds of self-doubt

*I want to be the best, she says*  
along the way she inspires  
encourages tutors others  
to reach past their own limits

*I don't want to be one of those people*  
*who quits when things are hard*  
press on gentle warrior  
press on toward peace



## Breah Etherly

Grade 9  
Scott K-8 School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Essence Fleming

Grade 1  
Rigler K-8 School

she carries the soul of a sage  
with a fearless curiosity  
a challenger of mysteries

*what does this mean?*

*how come?*

*why not?*

repeating questions like an ancient chant  
that rhythmically seeps from her bones

even mindless play provides lessons  
on the how comes and what fors  
a constant gardening of wisdom

even as a first grader  
she understands the importance  
of prudence staying on task  
expanding her own horizons  
doing her absolute best

on family trips she collects rocks  
a symbol of security spiritual faith  
the Essence of strength

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

A curious voracious learner  
Angelisha has argued for justice  
Researched diabetes  
Walked for those struggling with HIV  
Presented at conferences  
Interned at a NE free clinic  
Learning reading pushing  
She treats high school  
Like a stop on the success train  
Everyone knows she's going places  
Respected competitive college bound  
She juggles her responsibilities  
Like the leader she is  
Strong motivated self assured  
A picture of success



## Angeleesha Frierson

Grade 11  
Jefferson Middle  
College

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Ben Jackson

Grade 11  
Jefferson Middle  
College

his leadership is measured  
in the quiet accomplishments  
of making the honor roll  
taking college courses  
pursuing biotechnology  
mentoring middle schoolers  
he doesn't have to be loud  
for his life to speak  
of success vociferously

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

hope was ever present from  
the moment his parents gathered  
values in different countries but  
discovered they spoke the same language

hope moved like meringue around  
his wondering 5-year-old mind  
he determined then not even space  
was the outer limit of his curiosity

Michael is a natural born scientist  
who discovers value in the unknown  
delight in the universe's ionic bonding  
of problem and possibility

life then becomes a constant experiment  
Michael the ever-questioning inquisitor  
buoyed by his insistent certainty  
that the answers will - one day - be his



**Michael  
Joseph**  
Grade 11  
Cleveland High  
School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Stanley Mathabane

Grade 12  
Lincoln High  
School

YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK

mouth sealed eyes closed  
eyebrows furled close enough to play tag  
nimble fingertips plant firmly on keys  
harvesting an intense note bending rift  
jazz sweet jazz  
played in bands all over the city  
played in New York in front of jazz legends  
played on three ambitious tracks  
of a Grammy Award winner's latest album  
he doesn't let time interfere  
with his self-determined destiny  
taking a full load of college-prep courses  
creating space for theater theory singing  
multiplicities of magic that moves him  
like any jazz artist, a strong foundation  
is merely a source of inspiration  
Stanley is the embodiment of an  
eloquent South African father whose  
accomplishments instigate inspiration  
like father like son

you know how to move us astound us  
recapture our life's rhythmic subtleties  
teach us young dancer  
to flow gracefully over edges of thorns  
gather our raw emotions with quick limbs  
lay them bare upon your fingertips  
fling them back to us - loose and liberated  
to mingle with the glistening scents  
of red roses and sandalwood  
that rest in the hush of the crowd  
free us from the weightiness  
of what doesn't really matter anyway  
all heaviness fades as we witness  
wide-eyed and breathless  
the beauty of your nimbleness  
whirling jumping transforming time air  
dance for us once more young dancer  
dance for our tears mirth hopes dreams  
help us rediscover wonder  
help us to know beauty  
again



## Abriana McKinney

Grade 12  
Benson High  
School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Rayla Moore

Grade 8  
Marysville K-8  
School

the sun has to borrow her smile  
so bright are her daily greetings  
which sparkle with the thoughtful  
glow of well-placed compliments

meek modest and quiet she  
laughs when teachers' jokes aren't funny  
offers grace to quivering students  
eagerly carries loads that are not her own  
makes others feel embraced heard safe

unafraid of taking risks she stands  
firm resolute as Mt. Hood takes notes  
wise beyond her years always  
wanting to do her very best

Rayla embodies success  
willing and eager to build community  
model inclusivity  
seek we

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

when his school  
holds up a mirror it  
finds its community  
in the reflection  
of Michael's soul  
genuinely respected  
he excels academically  
volunteers voraciously  
mentors enthusiastically  
he never gives up  
he is like a gardener  
actively implanting  
kindness humor  
integrity beauty  
nurturing all  
blossoming respect



## Michael Ninen

Grade 8  
Sunnyside  
Environmental  
K-8 School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Elijah Raiford

Grade 7  
George Middle  
School

a lover of math  
he has it all figured out  
resourcefulness multiplies dividends  
any questions

near perfect attendance, check  
football awards, check  
principal awards, check  
honor roll awards, check

charismatic and curious  
he is a natural charmer  
motivated by challenge  
meticulously astute

he can even be equation changer  
it's not often a teacher says  
"he makes me want to be better"  
Elijah is just that special

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

a persistent joy  
it seems as if he grins  
on the inside  
strong in math  
reading writing  
he seeks learning  
with the diligence  
of a playful kitten  
grabbing at string  
a steady temperament  
he teaches others  
what it means  
to be genuinely  
yourself  
yet  
constantly  
creating  
a better you



**Solon  
Sanders**  
Grade 2  
Grout K-5 School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Izear Smith

Grade 12  
Madison High  
School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

his smile radiates  
reflecting an inner strength  
kind thoughtful unrelentingly positive  
Izear chases challenges like the wind  
trying to tame an unfurled flag  
his ambitions have led him to  
tutor younger students  
organize a Black Student Union  
excel in basketball  
be himself

mother teachers mentees  
all trusted guides to help channel  
his potential tame his grief  
smother self-doubt in the  
depths of their encouragement  
he wants to major in business  
start a non-profit help change lives

his dreams have already begun

if you want to discover  
the core of her determination  
the dimensions of its being  
you have to look within  
seek out the contours of her soul

it was there  
from the beginning  
that independent radiant fire  
intense as a dragon's bellyache

Jenesis has the kind of defiant will power  
that will work a mother's last nerve  
at age 2 but inspire pride at age 12  
a divine inheritance of success

these days, people don't ask  
what talents this willful child can unfurl  
they wonder what she can't accomplish  
that mystery? still undiscovered



## Jenesis Spires

Grade 7  
Peninsula K-8  
School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Emanuel Washington

Grade 4  
Buckman K-5  
School

if you look at his sleeves too closely  
you'll find his heart there  
open beating raw

Emanuel has risen from rocky places  
whose sharp edges and deep crevices  
threatened to swallow his progress

but compassionate teachers art  
a family's unconditional love  
protects his heart from nicks bruises

helps him find balance  
fine-tune his scientific mind  
experience the shaping of new possibilities

genuinely faithfully  
Emanuel embodies the meaning  
of his name "God is with us"

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

she greets each day  
with enthusiasm  
happy motivated  
curious caring  
open-minded  
energetic  
thirsty for learning  
focused hardworking  
self-motivated  
secure confident  
“I know I got this” attitude  
winner



**Olivia  
Washington**  
Grade 1  
Sabin PK-8 School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Christylle Weeks

Grade 8  
Jason Lee K-8  
School

entangled with unfair challenges  
she learned to love selflessly; her

quality of character was indestructible  
persistence was the thing for her; she

held fast to unlimited possibilities  
transcended the horror of heartbreak

with the guidance of her great aunt  
her teachers nurturing her sinuous roots

Christylle stands tall with the natural  
beauty resolve of a redwood tree; her

face turned toward the light; her arms  
wide with the breadth of her potential

her triumphs are like willful saplings  
sprouting wisdom resilience hope

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

Everything was different  
Friend's homework gossip  
lockers lunch recess games  
a middle school jigsaw puzzle

Tyler stayed steady on task  
helpful loving smart  
confidently he arranged  
the pieces of his life

at school at church  
at grandma's house  
the soccer field basketball practice  
everywhere he went

he deposited bits of himself  
like golden rays of sunlight  
polishing forgotten smiles  
brightening the atmosphere



## Tyler White

Grade 6  
Beverly Cleary K-8  
School

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**



## Ajeya Woods

Grade 11  
Lincoln High  
School

in some families

people are just born who they are  
destiny is infused into their genes  
nurture takes a backseat to nature

while mommy daddy procrastinate relax  
Ajeya is assiduous focused fearless  
an initiator of girls' empowerment projects  
a Constitution Team state champion

challenge is regularly calling her name  
excelling is her claim to fame  
volleyball is her favorite team game  
*she's impresses us very much, mom says*

*can't wait to see what she does next*  
somebody pass the popcorn please  
when Ajeya is in the house  
you're in store for a show of brilliance

**YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK**

a quiet strength, Hanan  
moves with grace and maturity  
spritzing cheerfulness with every step  
her spirit beckons your smile

a middle schooler, Hanan  
stays steady during an age of transition  
self-motivated leading by example  
focused as a photographer's eye

a friend to many, Hanan  
gathers a bountiful harvest of admirers  
teachers students family all grateful  
for having encountered sincere joy



## Hanan Yassin

Grade 8  
Beaumont Middle  
School

YOUNG GIFTED  
AND  
BLACK

**The *Young, Gifted and Black* tribute is a collaboration between PPS staff, special contributors and the community including:**

Reiko Williams, creator and curator

S. Renee Mitchell, researcher and writer

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Francisco Garcia, graphic designer

Melody White, printing support

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Terry Proctor, Elizabeth Hamilton and  
Robb Cowie

## YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK 2012 NOMINEES

Lillie Holzworth Arleta K-6	Jet Sheng Cesar Chavez K-8	Jahmian Howard-Carey Franklin High School
D'Angelo Lenford Arleta K-6	Kira Alberti Chief Joseph PK-5	Alivia Kent Franklin High School
Nohealani (Lani) Bannister Astor K-8	Jada Commodore Chief Joseph PK-5	Elijah Raiford George Middle School
Jaida Jeter Astor K-8	Michael Joseph Cleveland High School	Solon Sanders Grout K-5
Mekai Anderson Beach PK - 8	Sekai Edwards DaVinci Arts Middle School	Maryan Yerow Grout K-5
Ay'Mehir Tucker Beach PK - 8	Ameer Fofanah DaVinci Arts Middle School	Chiza Baleke Grout K-5
Shiloh Day Beach PK - 8	Jehdah Walker DaVinci Arts Middle School	Sagal Hadafow Hosford Middle School
Hanan Yassin Beaumont Middle School	Isaac Amaral East Sylvan Middle School	Samira Hadafow Hosford Middle School
Abriana McKinney Benson High School	Maya Brown Faubion PK-8	Nate Williams Hosford Middle School
Precious Andrews Benson High School (Alliance)	Nakyia Burns Faubion PK-8	Javondre Cole Humboldt PK-8
Tyler White Beverly Cleary K-8	Chinwendu Ughamba Faubion PK-8	LaShaya Corney Humboldt PK-8
Jordan Johnson Beverly Cleary K-8	Josie Bairo Franklin High School	Rebecca Davis Humboldt PK-8
Rebekah Lathan Boise Eliot PK-8	Shatanya Banks Franklin High School	Anayla Warren- Prem Singh Humboldt PK-8
Emanuel Washington Buckman K-5	Joseph Dessou Franklin High School	Jazmin Shaffer Irvington K-8
Kayden Logan Cesar Chavez K-8	Paris Gresham Franklin High School	Mathias Thelus Irvington K-8

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## YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK 2012 NOMINEES (CONTINUED)

Christylle Weeks Jason Lee K-8	Shanice Harris Lincoln High School	Josiah Greene Peninsula K-8
Clayborn Collins Jefferson High School	Stanley Mathabane Lincoln High School	Rize Robinson Peninsula K-8
Lauren Steele Jefferson High School	Jalen Asana Madison High School	Jenesis Spires Peninsula K-8
Makayela Johnson Jefferson High School	Kassandra Yewchuk Madison High School	Essence Fleming Rigler K-8
Uriah Boyd Jefferson High School	Mical Yohannes Madison High School	Adam Strasburg Roosevelt High School
Desi DuBoise Jefferson High School	Nykell Hunter Madison High School	Brajaye Williams Roosevelt High School
Angeleesha Frierson Jefferson High School	Terrence Keller Madison High School	Olivia Washington Sabin PK-8
Antonio Greely Jefferson High School	Biruk Molla Madison High School	Giovanni Cunningham Sabin PK-8 (ACCESS Academy)
Ben Jackson Jefferson High School	Izear Smith Madison High School	Trevionn Cunningham Sabin PK-8 (ACCESS Academy)
Jalean Webb Jefferson High School	Bryton Wilson Madison High School	Breah Etherly Scott K-8
Elisabeth Hairston Laurelhurst K-8	Basil Urom Madison High School	Michael Ninen Sunnyside Enviornmental K-8
Olivia Perry Laurelhurst K-8	Rayla Moore Marysville K-8	Makiyla Rounds Vestal K-8
Beau Gaines Lincoln High School	Hannah Dressa Mt. Tabor Middle School	Sadella Adams West Sylvan Middle School
Linnea Rohdin-Bibby Lincoln High School	Nailah Barrett Peninsula K-8	Shatoya Allen Young Women's Leadership Academy at Harriet Tubman
Haley Dowell Lincoln High School	Justin Dike Peninsula K-8	
Ajeya Woods Lincoln High School	Ayre Bradley Peninsula K-8	

# YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK 2012

In its third year, the Young, Gifted and Black 2012 tribute continues to focus on telling a story of persistence, hard work and student success – success that has been highlighted as a model for all students. Since this program began in 2010, several hundred students have been nominated by classroom teachers, counselors, principals and community members. Graduating students have continued their education at colleges and universities throughout the country - Tuskegee, Penn State, Lewis and Clark College, Grinnell College, and Portland State among others. YGB students balance athletics, music, community service and other extra-curricular activities demonstrating what is required to be a student scholar.

The board of directors for Portland Public Schools adopted a Racial Educational Equity Policy in June 2011. That policy is intended to acknowledge race and address race-based disparities in student achievement. Young, Gifted and Black is intended to tell a counter-story; namely, the experience of Black students is not mono-lithic, as is often portrayed in mainstream media. Black students come from diverse backgrounds and have myriad experiences, but they have a shared identity – as Black people representing the African diaspora.

We are proud to share with you student success stories. Please join me in acknowledging all of this year's honorees as well as the nominees and wishing them continued success.

*Reiko Williams*  
*Program Director, Family Engagement*  
*Portland Public Schools*