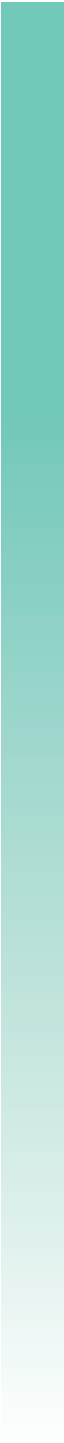


A large graphic featuring the silhouettes of two young Black people, likely a boy and a girl, facing each other. The silhouettes are dark brown and are set against a white circular background. The text 'YOUNG GIFTED AND BLACK' is overlaid on the silhouettes in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

# YOUNG GIFTED AND BLACK

## A Photo Gallery of Success



“ *You are young, gifted, and Black.* We must begin to tell our young, There’s a world waiting for you, Yours is the quest that’s just begun.”

- *James Weldon Johnson*

Portland Public Schools is committed to serving all of its students. Our district believes that diversity is not just a goal, but a primary strength. Young, Gifted, and Black is a program that encourages PPS employees to look for and nominate Black students whose stories and accomplishments help lift everyone’s expectations about the way education changes all of our lives. As we celebrate these individuals, we increase our determination to create a more equitable district for all students. Congratulations to all of the 2017 Young, Gifted and Black Honorees.

**Bob McKean**  
Interim Superintendent  
Portland Public Schools

# Young, Gifted and Black

## 2017 Nominees

Bobbie Steen	<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>	<i>Cleveland High School</i>
<i>Alliance High School at Meek</i>	Evan Heisler	Tynesha Parnell
Habibo Jama	<i>Chapman Elementary</i>	<i>Cleveland High School</i>
<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>	Bri Henderson	Marquis Penn
Mariamou Abdoulaye	<i>Grant High School</i>	<i>Grant High School</i>
<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>	Donnell Hendrix	Ariana Peters
Amaya Aldridge	<i>Creston K-8 School</i>	<i>Franklin High School</i>
<i>Grant High School</i>	Aojah Z. Hill	Khiarica Rasheed
Rafi Ali	<i>Roosevelt High School</i>	<i>Grant High School</i>
<i>Vestal K-8 School</i>	Faiza Jama	Jaamir Roberson
ZahRyiah M. Allen	<i>Roosevelt High School</i>	<i>Martin Luther King Jr. PK-8 School</i>
<i>Martin Luther King Jr. PK-8 School</i>	Caleb Johnson	Kaila Sampson
Kwame Assuman	<i>Roseway Heights K-8 School</i>	<i>Franklin High School</i>
<i>Madison High School</i>	Sidney Jones	Kennadi Sanders
Yosha Auch-Kness	<i>Grant High School</i>	<i>Martin Luther King Jr. PK-8 School</i>
<i>Metropolitan Learning Center</i>	Adia Jones	Lincoln Saruk
Chito Baleke	<i>Jackson Middle School</i>	<i>Kairos PDX</i>
<i>Roosevelt High School</i>	Kaleha Keenan	Solianna Seid
Ramses Blackthorn	<i>Roosevelt High School</i>	<i>Martin Luther King Jr. PK-8 School</i>
<i>Cesar Chavez K-8 School</i>	Akili Kelekele	Amari Shearer
Aliemah Bradley	<i>Lincoln High School</i>	<i>Lent K-8 School</i>
<i>Jefferson High School</i>	Marceline Kilassa	Ayana Smith
Dominick Branch	<i>Franklin High School</i>	<i>Creative Science K-8 School</i>
<i>Grant High School</i>	Gloria Kitanga	Jenesis Spires
Maxwell Britton-Jackson	<i>Sellwood Middle School</i>	<i>Roosevelt High School</i>
<i>Roosevelt High School</i>	Semeredin Kundi	Olivia Stills
Marquandre Brown-Rhone	<i>Lincoln High School</i>	<i>Buckman Arts Focus</i>
<i>Franklin High School</i>	Brynn Ladd	<i>Elementary School</i>
Amaya Chenault-Statton	<i>KairosPDX</i>	Isaiah Strong
<i>Sellwood Middle School</i>	Joshua Lathan	<i>Franklin High School</i>
Javondre Cole	<i>Cesar Chavez K-8 School</i>	Umari Stroud
<i>Jefferson High School</i>	Elston J. Martin III	<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>
Wesley Crawford	<i>Martin Luther King Jr. PK-8 School</i>	Tehya Skylar Tate
<i>Wilson High School</i>	Wilondja Mashimango	<i>Franklin High School</i>
Nikole Davis	<i>Madison High School</i>	Henok Techeste
<i>Grant High School</i>	Noreena McCleave	<i>Lincoln High School</i>
Zawadi Doti	<i>Wilson High School</i>	Andre Tharp
<i>Cleveland High School</i>	Sade Means	<i>Grant High School</i>
Cory Doyle	<i>Grant High School</i>	Alanna Marie Valerio-Mendieta
<i>Roosevelt High School</i>	Atumakil Mitchell	<i>Mount Tabor Middle School</i>
Matthew Dressa	<i>Buckman Arts Focus</i>	Anne Wachana
<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>	<i>Elementary School</i>	<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>
Yvette Dumer	Zaccai Mode	Zahara Wadeh
<i>Franklin High School</i>	<i>Sabin K-8 School</i>	<i>Buckman Arts Focus</i>
Hikima Edao	IhsaanMohamed	<i>Elementary School</i>
<i>Scott K-8 School</i>	<i>Wilson High School</i>	Jazzmine Watkins
Lauren Ellis	Florence Monique	<i>Franklin High School</i>
<i>Grant High School</i>	<i>Robert Gray Middle School</i>	Kamaria Watson
Lashaun Emile	Michael Morgan	<i>Roosevelt High School</i>
<i>Madison High School</i>	<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>	Londyn Watson
Maya Fine	Amaya Morris	<i>Trillium Charter School</i>
<i>Lincoln High School</i>	<i>Sabin K-8 School</i>	Dominique West
Alexandria Frison	Joseline Muhimpundu	<i>Vernon K-8 School</i>
<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>	<i>Roosevelt High School</i>	Hannah Wiler
Amaya Gustave	Caesar (Mucai) Muthubi	<i>Madison High School</i>
<i>Franklin High School</i>	<i>Cleveland High School</i>	Dominic Wilson-Carr
Aminia Hammick	Carelle Namegabe	<i>Benson Polytechnic High School</i>
<i>Sabin K-8 School</i>	<i>Lincoln High School</i>	Jai'aja Winchester
Penecolia Hardy	Camren Oliva	<i>Grant High School</i>
<i>Madison High School</i>	<i>Chapman Elementary</i>	Adrian Woodley
Abdi Hassan	Dylan Palmer	<i>Grant High School</i>
<i>Madison High School</i>	<i>Grant High School</i>	Nimco Yusuf
Krishay Hayes-Motely	Shanta Palshikar	<i>Lane Middle School</i>

# Young, Gifted and Black

Wednesday, May 31, 2017

- Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing*.....*Alonzo Chadwick, vocalist*  
*Graduate of Jefferson High School*  
*Derrick McDuffey, pianist*
- Greeting of Guests/Welcome*.....*Bob McKean, Interim Superintendent*  
*Portland Public Schools*
- Introduction of Speaker*.....*Ezell Watson, Business Operations Analyst*  
*Equity & Partnerships*  
*Portland Public Schools*
- Keynote Address*.....*Dr. Darryl Tukufu*  
*Assistant Superintendent, Office of Equity,*  
*Diversity and Inclusion*  
*Oregon Department of Education*
- Recognition of*  
*Parents/Families/Guests*.....*Dr. Julie Esparza Brown, Board Member*  
*Portland Public Schools Board of Education*
- Presentation of Honorees*.....*Dr. Carolyn Leonard, Retired Administrator*  
*Portland Public Schools*  
*Graduate of Girls Polytechnic High School*
- A Tribute*.....*Dr. Reginald C. Richardson*  
*Deputy Director*  
*Oregon Department of Human Services*
- Closing Remarks*.....*Ezell Watson, Business Operations Analyst*  
*Equity & Partnerships*  
*Portland Public Schools*
- Black and Beautiful*.....*Alonzo Chadwick, vocalist*  
*Graduate of Jefferson High School*  
*Derrick McDuffey, pianist*

## Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing

*by James Weldon Johnson*

Lift every voice and sing,  
till earth and heaven ring,  
Ring with the harmonies of liberty;  
Let our rejoicing rise  
High as the listening skies,  
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.  
Sing a song full of the faith that the  
dark past has taught us,  
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;  
facing the rising sun of our new day begun,  
let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,  
bitter the chastening rod,  
felt in the days when hope unborn had died;  
yet with a steady beat,  
have not our weary feet  
come to the place  
for which our fathers died?  
We have come over a way that with tears have been watered,  
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,  
out from the gloomy past,  
till now we stand at last  
where the white gleam  
of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,  
God of our silent tears,  
thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;  
thou who hast by thy might led us into the light,  
keep us forever in the path, we pray.  
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met thee;  
lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget thee,  
shadowed beneath thy hand,  
may we forever stand,  
true to our God,  
true to our native land.



*If I could do anything I wanted with my life, I would:  
Travel to my homeland and around the world to  
help black people.*

Mariamou Abdoulaye — May 2017

## **Mariamou Abdoulaye**

Benson Polytechnic High School

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## Mariamou Abdoulaye

Benson Polytechnic High School

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Mariamou Abdoulaye is an eleventh-grade student at Benson Polytechnic High School. She was born in the Central African Republic and has a unique cultural and linguistic experience as she spent most of her childhood there and in Cameroon. Her native language is Fulani which she is currently learning to speak and write. Mariamou lives in Portland with her mom, dad, three brothers and three sisters.

Mariamou is described by her teacher as: “an aspiring and highly motivated young woman.” Besides working very hard to maintain a B+ or above, she excels in academics. In addition, she has worked with the International Youth Leadership Council as an advanced leader who supports new council members. Mariamou has taught other high school students how to tackle challenging issues in their communities. As a BSU member, she participated in fundraising to support students’ trip to Atlanta, Georgia. The goal was to visit Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), learn more about civil rights and gain information that is often not covered in mainstream history books.

Evenings and weekends are completely booked with studying and engaging in voluntary activities. She hands out food, serves on a local youth group that cleans up litter, reads to children and teaches youth about the importance of dental hygiene.

Mariamou continually works to improve her English skills. She is acknowledged as a gifted writer. As a student at the Portland International Scholars Academy (PISA), she received awards in her English, biology and math classes. She is currently enjoying her time in clinical rotation at Kaiser’s Emergency Department. She also gave a speech and taught eighth graders about CPR and general health. Ultimately, she wants to enter the medical field as a pediatric nurse.

In between working and editing college admission essays, studying and volunteering in the community, Mariamou manages to spend quality time with her family. She also works during the summer for Portland Parks and Recreation distributing lunches, leading activities and providing academic tutoring.

Mariamou considers her mother and father to be her role models. In addition to all they do while caring for seven children, they were able to complete all of the needed paperwork to come to the United States. Recently, her mother became a citizen of the United States.

AVID has been crucial in helping Mariamou prepare for college. Looking ahead, she wants to finish college, travel to her homeland and to other parts of the world.



**Yosha Auch-Kness**

Metropolitan Learning Center



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## Yosha Auch-Kness

Metropolitan Learning Center

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Yosha Auch-Ness is a twelfth-grade student at the Metropolitan Learning Center. She was born in Portland, Oregon. Yosha lives with her dad, her step-mom and one younger sibling.

The name Yosha is a Russian name that means “woman who protects”.

Yosha describes herself as an individual who does organizing in school. She says: “I stand up for things.” She has testified before the Oregon State Board of Education as well as two times at the meeting of the Portland Public Schools Board of Education. Yosha has also worked with the Portland City Action Network.

Teachers describe Yosha as: “an incredibly hardworking student who does well academically at MLC. Last semester in Civics class she documented well over 30 events that she participated in the previous few months. Yosha is a seriously dedicated activist and has tossed around the idea of becoming a lawyer or politician. She is sincere about helping reform our society.

Yosha is concerned about equity and she made a presentation to the MLC staff at an equity meeting. Though sharing information about the school auction was not received well by everyone who attended the equity meeting, Yosha challenged the staff to use an equity lens when organizing events. She was commended by some people for remaining composed “Intelligent, motivated, conscious, kind and talented are words that some staff use to describe Yosha. She describes herself as “funny”, “persevering” and “dedicated” and says that her role model is Assata Shakur, a social activist.

The fact that Yosha’s mother is black and her father is white gives her additional insights. She cares deeply about equity and gets involved in events that educate other people. Yosha is currently helping with the Oregon Career Youth Summit and gets involved in issues that impact the LBGTO communities. Yosha credits living with her mother in northern California as opening her eyes to racism and homophobia and she states: “I never knew.” Now she says: “I have a strong drive to do the right thing.”

Yosha will attend Evergreen College on a “a full ride”. Her future plans include completing an undergraduate degree and going to law school. Yosha says if she could do anything that she wants to do, she would travel to Israel again, Nigeria and other parts of West Africa.

*If there was one change I could make in the world:  
I would end white supremacy.*

Yosha Auch-Ness - May 2017



**Chito Baleke**

Roosevelt High School

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## Chito Baleke

Roosevelt High School

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Chito Baleke is a twelfth-grade student at Roosevelt High School. She was born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and came to the United States six years ago with her father, mother, three brothers and three sisters. Chito and her family fled their homeland to escape war and violence and settled in Rwanda where they lived in a refugee camp.

Chito's teacher describes her as "an amazing young woman who has been through and witnessed things that no young person should." She is commended for her positive attitude because she never complains, is angry or has a negative thing to say. She persists and goes forward with a smile on her face. Chito is the definition of resiliency and determination.

"Strong", "brave" and "hardworking" are the words Chito uses to describe herself.

She has a 3.6 GPA and attributes her grades to the fact that she never gives up, completes her assignments, has excellent attendance and is respectful. Chito says she enjoys math (because she gets it right away), tennis and listening to music. She wants to develop her public speaking skills. Watching videos helps Chito improve her comprehension and ability to speak.

AVID and Senior Inquiry (15 credits taken at Portland State University) and Step-Up have been helpful and contributing to her high school success and preparing her for college. In addition, Chito wants to acknowledge and thank her teachers, counselor, parents, extended family and friends for supporting her and contributing to her success.

Chito likes Roosevelt High School because "teachers and staff support you when you need help and they are like a second family." They really care about the students.

Michelle Obama is the person Chito considers to be her role model. Mrs. Obama has worked with young people and she has been very visible as she embraces various communities.

Looking ahead, Chito wants to give back to the community by going to college, graduating and becoming a registered nurse.

*A thought I would like to share: Don't ever give up. Ask for help. Advocate for yourself. Work really hard.*

Chito Baleke - 2017



**Aliemah Bradley**

Jefferson High School

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## Aliemah Bradley

Jefferson High School

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Aliemah Bradley is a twelfth-grade student at Jefferson High School. She was born in Portland and lives with her mom and her younger sister.

Aliemah is described by her teacher as a “strong advocate for student voice in education.” Currently, she is the student representative on the PPS School Board, student body president for Jefferson, and president of the BSU. She consistently speaks truth to power and insists on surfacing the experiences of students of color and particularly Black students. Aliemah consistently seeks to build inclusive cultures where all students feel welcome, safe and valued. During her years at Jefferson, she has not only raised important issues but helped students to find their voice. She pursues social justice tirelessly. She has used the opportunity to work with the school board and SuperSAC to keep a sharp focus on equity and the ways that race plays out in the school system. She is aware that her seat at the table affords her the opportunity to influence policy.

Aliemah describes herself as “ambitious”, “critical” and “caring”. She has a 3.6 GPA. Senior Inquiry (english and government policy) that provides 15 college credits is her favorite course of study. She also likes writing and appreciates the policy class that she took at Portland Community College. Aliemah decided that she wanted to broaden her perspectives by traveling abroad. She conducted research and found a program called “Cultural Connections”. Within a two-month period, with the help of her mother, she was able to secure the funding for travel to Ghana to participate in a one month-volunteer program.

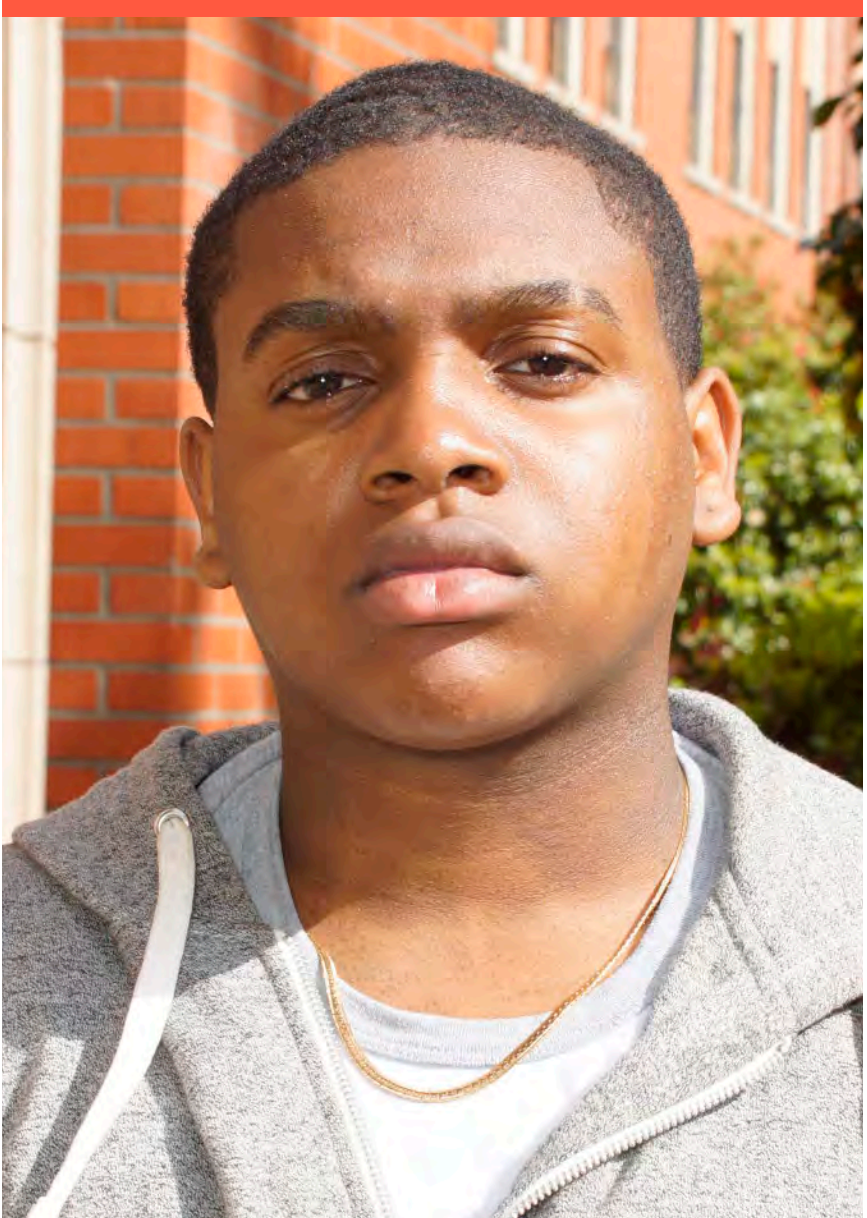
Aliemah tries to engage others and not just herself. She is grateful for the role that Self-Enhancement, Inc. (SEI), her mom, her friend Naaman, and numerous others have played in her life. With regard to Jefferson High School, Aliemah says: “I just love this place! It gives Black students the freedom to be Black and values what Blacks bring to the table.”

Aliemah is passionate about education. She will attend the University of Illinois and says she might end up in politics at the state or national level. “Maybe one day I can become the Secretary of Education.”

*If there is one change I could make in the world:*

*I would end systematic oppression.*

Aliemah Bradley - May 2017



**Dominick Branch**

Grant High School

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## Dominick Branch

Grant High School

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Dominick Branch is an eleventh-grade student at Grant High School. He was born in Portland and he lives with his mom and his 12-year old brother.

Dominick is described by his teacher as a gifted drummer and an AP student. “Domo”, as he is called by his friends, has a story that is almost mythic—full of sadness and full of triumph. As an eight-year child, his shoe string got caught on the railroad tracks and his foot was run over by a train. His arm was also badly scarred in the accident. This event resulted in him being pulled away from athletics and catapulted towards music. He has stated that he, “never would have picked up the drums if it wasn’t for the accident.”

As a junior in high school, Domo has already played at multiple jazz festivals, including the prestigious Monterey Jazz Festival in California, as well as festivals in Canada and throughout the United States. A challenge posed by a teacher who transferred to Grant from Franklin resulted in Vice Principal Diallo Lewis recruiting students of color for Grant’s AP classes. Domo was one of ten students who was placed in AP classes. Domo was a key leader in encouraging other students to make the decision to challenge themselves by taking these classes.

Domo is focused on being a jazz drummer. When tragedy struck and his father was killed in the street in Arizona, two days later Domo opened the show at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall for jazz legend Wynton Marsalis. His passion is music and he is committed to becoming a full-time professional jazz drummer. Domo says “I try to be positive ... share positive thoughts. I don’t like negativity.” His commitment as a jazz drummer has resulted in him receiving multiple awards at jazz camps. He knows that he is on the verge of being a professional drummer.

Though Domo’s priority is jazz drumming, he maintains a 3.2 grade point average. He makes sure that all of his assignments are completed when he plays gigs around town. Domo says he is successful because he pushes himself. He is motivated by being around other musicians. He gives thanks to Alan Jones (jazz drummer), the American Music Program, and Charlie Brown (piano player and the person who helped him start drumming).

Devon Phillips, a famous sax player, is Domo’s role model. “He does what I want to do ... he is positive and he has a nice family.”

Looking ahead, Domo says he will graduate and continue performing and studying jazz drumming. Without a doubt he will be a professional jazz drummer and when he is, new and upcoming musicians will play the introductory sessions before he takes center stage.

*If there was one change I could make in the world: Make music that brings people together. Music should be positive. It should have a story.*

Dominick “Domo” Branch – May 2017



**Wesley Crawford**  
Wilson High School



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## Wesley Crawford

Wilson High School

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Wesley Crawford is a twelfth-grade student at Wilson High School. He was born in Hillsboro, Oregon. Wesley lives with his mom and older brother.

Wesley is the ASB (Associated Student Body) President of Wilson High School. His teacher has said that he is, “a strong leader for [their] school and he has balanced this with a college prep course load.”

As a freshman, Wesley came from a school in another district. He says “by networking, [he] was able to win a school office.” In fact, Wesley has held an office each of his four years at Wilson. When he was diagnosed with bone cancer and had to have extensive chemotherapy treatments, Wesley was determined to take advanced courses and keep his grades up. All of his teachers were impressed with his dedication and the level of grace and humility that he displayed during this time. In spite of his illness, he was able to maintain a good grade point average.

Wesley describes himself as “thoughtful”, “fun” and “charismatic”. He admits that he has a great support system. His parents, brother and close friends believe he can do well. “People believe in me,” he has stated. He likes Wilson because teachers, students and staff make the school like a community. Wesley offers his sincerest thanks to the Wilson Leadership Team, the baseball program and many others who played a role in his success.

Donald Glover is Wesley’s role model because he does many things well—he is an actor, writer, film director, political activist—and he has won many awards.

Looking forward, Wesley will attend Temple University where he will focus on market research and earn a degree in economics and finance. He intends to strive for a 4.0 GPA in college.

*A thought I would like to share: Be kind to each other. There is never a benefit to not being nice.*

Wesley Crawford - May 2017



**Zawadi Doti**

Cleveland High School



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## Zawadi Doti

Cleveland High School

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Zawadi Doti is a twelfth-grade student at Cleveland High School. Though her family is originally from Ethiopia, she was born in Nairobi, Kenya. Prior to the Doti children coming to the United States, Zawadi and her sisters (one of whom is her twin) lived with their mother and father. Zawadi's father left Kenya and traveled to America in search of a greater opportunity. She and her sibling stayed with their mother until she abandoned them. Then the girls moved in with their grandmother. At the age of nine, Zawadi was given the chance to unite with her father. Currently, Zawadi and her three sisters live in Portland with their dad.

Zawadi is an outstanding student who has a 3.6 GPA. She is a member of National Honor Society, co-founder/co-president of the BSU (Black Student Union), and a member of Key Club. She takes four IB classes, enjoys anthropology, psychology and literature and participates in AVID. However, Zawadi would like to have literature that reflects the writings of Pan African authors.

Though Zawadi likes her school, she would love to have curriculum that recognizes the history, culture and contributions of people of color. She would like information that includes Black leaders. Zawadi describes herself as "motivated," "kind" and "African".

Zawadi has helped organize school wide events like the multicultural fair. She has demonstrated her love for science and the environment through a Portland Parks Internship. This internship involved taking care of different parks in the community, teaching youth of Portland about how we can maintain a healthy environment. Zawadi also takes time to volunteer at the Oregon Humane Society.

Many people have supported Zawadi. The AVID program has provided Zawadi the opportunity to go on college tours, look for scholarships, and prepare college applications. She wants to thank her AVID teachers, Mrs. Blattner and Mr. Hillis as well as her college counselor, Robin. She would also like to thank her grandmother and her father for being role models and providing a support system for her and her sisters.

Looking forward, Zawadi will go out of state to Pitzer College (in Claremont, California) where she will major in psychology and creative writing.

*If there was one change I could make in the world: I would make it so everyone could communicate and understand other languages.*

Zawadi Doti - May 2017



**Matthew Dressa**

Benson Polytechnic High School



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## Matthew Dressa

Benson Polytechnic High School

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Matthew Dressa is a twelfth-grade student at Benson Polytechnic High School. He was born in San Diego, California and lives with his dad. He has two sisters who are in college and often visits his grandmother.

Matthew was nominated because of his commitment to academics. A school leader said, "Last year Matthew earned straight A's while taking three higher level classes with some of our most academically challenging teachers in the building. This year, he has the most demanding schedule of all of my seniors: he is taking three AP classes in addition to taking Calculus at Portland State University. He is taking math at PSU because the class did not fit into his schedule at Benson. I believe that one reason Matthew is such a strong student is because he is extremely organized. I often see him studying in the College and Career Center. He told me he likes to study there because if he has any free time, he can use the center to work on college applications and scholarships."

Matthew has overcome a lot of obstacles. His family is originally from Ethiopia/ Mozambique and very few of his immediate family members have graduated from high school. His dad is a single parent who supports his three children. Matthew has learned to handle transitions on a daily basis.

Being fluent in two languages and having a diverse cultural background has sparked Matthew's interest in pursuing a career in international relations. Matthew is a radio major at Benson and he is an excellent public speaker. He is the spokesperson for the Upward Bound program and was chosen to attend the national conference in Washington, DC. Matthew was selected by staff to represent Benson at the local Rotary club where he received a scholarship.

With all of the studying, carrying out his responsibilities for the radio station, tutoring students in math and participating in other extracurricular activities, Matthew is involved with planning and coordinating the building of a float for the 2017 Rose Parade.

Matthew is grateful for all of the support he has received and wants to thank Upward Bound, his grandmother, math teacher Ms. Pfohman and his social studies teacher Mr. Joshua Weiner. He is pleased that Benson has a diverse population and that the school has programs that prepare students for careers.

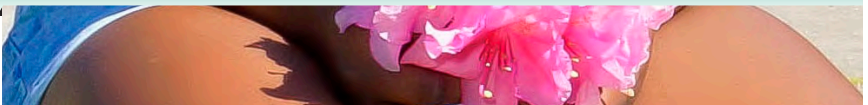
After graduation, Matthew will take a trip to Japan with a friend, courtesy of his grandmother. He will return and enroll in Cornell University to study government, economics and finance. Matthew is elated that he will finish college and graduate debt free. Perhaps he will be a United Nations Policy Analyst.

*If there was one change I could make in the world: I would end world poverty.*

Matthew Dressa – May 2017



**Yvette Dumer**  
Franklin High School



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## Yvette Dumer

Franklin High School

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Yvette Dumer is an eleventh-grade student at Franklin High School. She was born in Portland and lives with her dad, mother and sister.

When Yvette came to Franklin High School as a freshman she says, "I got good grades but did not care about school, but then I decided to step up my game." One of her teachers says, "Yvette had the most amazing transformation after her freshman year. She went from average grades as a freshman to nearly straight A's, with Honor in English her sophomore year. As a junior, she had all A's and B's. She is an amazing role model. Yvette has grit. She is the only kid I know who went to the Step Up program because she wanted extra support to be successful. She has very high expectations for herself and is extremely hard working. Attending a school where the African American population is 6% is an obstacle in terms of institutional racism. Yvette has been able to overcome the cultural isolation and lack of role models and cultural connection and forge a path and an identity that she can be proud of."

"Yvette holds her fellow peers accountable in terms of turning in their work and going to class. She discourages them from showing up in any other way than their best self.

Yvette has impeccable grades, school attendance, and extracurricular participation in the Youth Environmental Justice Alliance and the Step Up program. She is well rounded in her interests and in the spirit of giving back to her community. Yvette was selected to attend the GEAR UP Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Civil Rights tour.

"Funny," "nice", and "compassionate," are words that Yvette uses to describe herself. Yvette says that her mom is her role model because she supports her. Yvette's mom encourages her to go to school and wants Yvette to be successful.

Writing, math, and dance are the subjects Yvette enjoys most. She also enjoys playing basketball and volleyball, as well as participating in track. Yvette questions whether or not she is learning everything she should be learning. She also worries that some things may not be as accessible to students because of the way they are taught and the pace at which they are taught. Yvette says, "Some people just get left behind."

Yvette would like to thank the Step Up Program and her parents for the support that they have provided. Their support has made a difference.

Looking ahead, Yvette says she will go to college. She would like to be a doctor who works in a hospital emergency room.

*An idea I would like to share: You can achieve your dreams and still have fun!*  
Yvette Dumer – May 2017

*A thought that I would like to share: Life is too short to worry about things you think you failed. Keep moving forward. Make changes. It is what you do right now that matters.*

Maya Fine - May 2017



**Maya Fine**

Lincoln High School



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## Maya Fine

Lincoln High School

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Maya Fine is a twelfth-grade student at Lincoln High School. She was born in San Francisco and lives with her mom, dad and two younger brothers.

Maya is described by her teachers as “well-rounded in that she gets stellar grades, has a great attitude and is involved in numerous, meaningful activities in and out of school. She is a full IB Diploma candidate on track to be valedictorian and has been accepted to Stanford University. Though math has challenged her; Maya recalls spending countless nights studying, doing homework and meeting with teachers outside of class. Her struggle has made her realize that hard work pays off.

Making her school and community a welcoming place is important to Maya. She was selected as 1 of 5 Program Leaders for Lincoln’s Anti-Bullying Program. Further, she was selected as 1 of 5 Executive Cardinal Mentors, a program that pairs upperclassmen with underclassmen to help with the transition to high school. Maya is Public Relations Coordinator and a Cabinet member for Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA).

Serving those who are less fortunate is a strong family value and Maya finds ways to give back throughout the year. She recently traveled to Costa Rica for a 5-week service trip, where she helped repair schools, worked on a rainforest preservation and helped with language education.

Maya says her level of consciousness was heightened when she moved from an exclusive area in Marin County (in California). She had never seen homelessness. She says “moving caused me to grow up and become a different person.” “Enthusiastic,” “empathetic,” and “hardworking” are words that Maya uses to describe herself. Her role model is her mother whom she describes as an energetic, empathetic, kind, caring, intelligent woman who gives 110%.

Having earned a 4.0 GPA (4.4 weighted GPA), Maya has met the challenges of the IB program; however, in reflection she states, she realizes that there is pressure to be good at everything. It is possible to overexert oneself and sacrifice passion for some subjects.

With all that Maya does, she still finds time to have a job. If that is not enough, she has recently started her own company: Glimpse Careers, where people can arrange to do job shadows.

As her senior year comes to an end, Maya is preparing to go to the Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California. As a Stamp Scholar, she will receive a full ride plus a \$20,000 enrichment fund to spend ways she deems necessary.

Maya is grateful for the inclusive environment she has experienced at Lincoln High School. She says that there is mutual respect between students and teachers. She wants to thank her immediate and extended family, the IB teachers, and the college counselors both inside and outside of Lincoln. Their support has made a huge difference.



**Donnell Hendrix**

Creston Elementary School

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## Donnell Hendrix

Creston Elementary School

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Donnell Hendrix is a fifth-grade student at Creston Elementary School. He was born in Los Angeles, California. Donnell lives with his dad, mom, two brothers and one sister. His family calls him "Nelle" and friends call him "Donald." Donnell is described by his teacher as, "...quick to learn a new skill and enjoys the thrill of tackling a challenging problem. He is always willing to revise, improve and tweak to make work stand out. He doesn't hesitate to help others, laugh and smile. His warm and friendly nature is an asset to our school and community. Donnell received many academic and character awards throughout the school year ... he loves to engage in analytical things and steps up to the challenge no matter how big or small. He isn't afraid of failure. Having the willingness to take on anything knowing you might not succeed is a trait I wish all my students would have." On class work, Donnell usually gets "exceeds."

Math and PE are the subjects Donnell likes most. He says that his mom, dad, and friends, as well as Ms. Woods encourage and support him. Donnell willingly helps other students in his classroom with their math. He describes himself as, "funny", "smart", and "kind."

Donnell says that he would like to thank his mom, dad, brother, sister and friends and the SUN program for contributing to his success.

Because his dad encourages him to do the right thing and to make good decisions, Donnell considers his father to be his role model.

If Donnell could do anything he wanted with his life, he says: "I would make it so that I am good at everything positive."

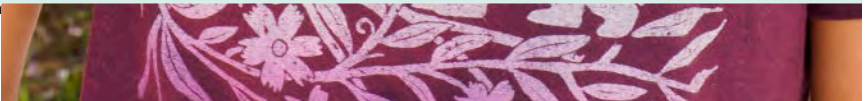
*If there was one change I could make in this world: I would make it so nobody could kill anybody.*

Donnell Hendrix – May 2017



**Aojah Hill**

Roosevelt High School



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## Aojah Hill

Roosevelt High School

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Aojah Hill is a twelfth-grade student at Roosevelt High School. She was born in Portland. She currently lives with friends in North Portland.

Aojah is described by her teacher as, "... and exceptionally intelligent, mature high school senior. She is a young intellectual who has an abiding passion for learning. Like Lorraine Hansberry, for whom this award is named, Aojah thinks deeply and analytically, striving to grasp highly challenging concepts. She is committed to social justice through theater and writing. She truly is a gifted young woman. Aojah has an exceptional capacity for remaining hopeful and purposeful, even when life would seem impossible for other people. She has attended three different high schools since her sophomore year, yet has maintained a high GPA. She is currently Title X but she never lets on that she has challenges in her personal life. Aojah is active in school theater, currently helping produce the Social Justice Theater Project, focusing on the impact of gentrification on the North Portland community. In addition, as a 10th grader, she designed and published a children's picture book as part of a creative writing class in collaboration with the Pacific Northwest College of Art, Ooligan Press at PSU, and the Roosevelt High School Writing Center.

Aojah loves deep discussions about a broad range of topics with adults and her peers. She has a dry sense of humor and she is kind to everyone she encounters.

Aojah maintains a calm, quiet demeanor, even when life around her is chaotic. She is humble and deeply compassionate. Like Lorraine Hansberry, Aojah is a beautiful, resilient young African American woman who is intelligent, creative and wise beyond her years.

Aojah has been accepted into the Portland State University Honors Program.

*If you could do anything you wanted to do with your life, what would you do? Change the nature of life--- Procreate, survive, live.*

Aojah Hill – May 2017



**Adia Jones**

Jackson Middle School

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## Adia Jones

Jackson Middle School

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Adia Jones is an eighth-grade student at Jackson Middle School. She was born in Portland, Oregon. Adia lives with her mother, stepdad, brother and sister.

The teacher who nominated Adia for the Young, Gifted and Black award states, "Adia entered Jackson Middle School in seventh grade and quickly made friends. She continues to extend herself to new students and sings in our Ensemble Choir. Besides being in a demanding choir at school, she has also done plays and has served as a teacher's assistant in our medically fragile classroom all school year. Adia is a Peer Helper. (She arrives early in the morning before the school day begins and volunteers her time). On top of this she attains all A's and B's and is a positive asset in her classes.

In addition to participating in the Jackson Middle School choir, Adia is involved in her church choir. This has taken her to Houston, Texas and England. Participation in the Trinity Episcopal Church choir during the summer has afforded her the opportunity to travel to a variety of places in the United States and abroad during the summer. Adia says that she enjoys music and serving as a volunteer teacher's assistant in the special needs classroom at her school.

Adia describes herself as, "caring," "open-minded" and "diverse." She considers her cousin to be her role model because she received a full ride scholarship. She worked hard and is now graduating from college.

When asked to describe an event or experience that changed her life, Adia says, "...having my stepdad become a father figure; he is the father figure I needed to change my life."

Adia says she wants to thank Trinity Episcopal Church, her parents and grandparents for the contributions they have made to her success. She is grateful to have her mom, "dad" and friends encourage and support her learning.

*What I want people to know and remember about me: I will listen and I will have an open mind.*

Adia Jones – May 2017



**Sidney Jones**  
Grant High School



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## Sidney Jones

Grant High School

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Sidney Jones is a Grant High School senior. She was born in Portland and lives with her best friend's family. Friends call her "Sunny". "Stubborn", "Determined" and "Loving" are words that Sidney uses to describe herself. Friends call her "Sonny".

The educator who nominated Sidney describes her as "... a student that is not only brilliant, but has overcome multiple barriers and obstacles to get where she is today. She takes pride in her work and leaves a strong impression on every teacher or adult that she meets. As a student leader she pushes herself and others to be their best self."

Despite struggles with mental health, Sidney has maintained a strong GPA of 3.83. She has a wonderful sense of humor, is extremely articulate and has a passion for social justice. Sidney won first place in the story telling completion "StorySlam" with her personal account of resilience in the face of adversity.

Sidney has been through a lot, she believes sharing her story can help other students. Her work as a peer leader with Reconnecting Youth both helps others and reminds her how she derives strength from her experiences. Being intrinsically motivated helps Sidney learn many different things. She enjoys learning Japanese, loves history, especially when viewed through the lens of people of color or the disadvantaged. While working at a children's art studio and as a nanny she has shared her knowledge and skills with others. Sidney believes Grant students should have more opportunity to learn about oppressed groups, she says "People miss out when they are not exposed to different perspectives."

Sidney considers Reconnecting Youth counselor, Kate Allen to be a role model. She also wants to acknowledge counselor Amanda Jordan and Linda Barbarosa, who enrolled her in school and with whom she has "found a home".

If Sidney could do anything with her life she would have a farm in the country where she could help foster children with problems.

Looking forward, Sidney will attend Mills College in Oakland, California. She plans to double major in psychology and child development.

*A thought I would like to share: Everyone has potential.*

Sidney Jones – May 2017



**Gloria Kitanga**

Sellwood Middle School

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## Gloria Kitanga

Sellwood Middle School

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Gloria Kitanga is an eighth-grader at Sellwood Middle School. She lives with her mom, dad and four sisters.

Gloria's teacher says she: "...is a wonderful person and a terrific student. She has an infectious positive personality and seems to get along well with classmates. She often chooses to work with students who are struggling with the skill or concept we're working on and patiently answers their questions and guides them through with gentle prompts and reminders. The quality of her work is incredible." Gloria takes full advantage of every opportunity to better herself and her school.

When asked what contributes to her academic success, Gloria says "My teachers, reading and Kahn Academy." She loves math, history and historical fiction. She would like to study human anatomy.

Gloria loves learning and sharing her knowledge. By tutoring students in her neighborhood Gloria gives back to her community. Her dad is her role model. He came from the Congo with a degree in psychology, and then earned degrees in technology and engineering here in the States.

"Helpful," "Appreciative" and "Hardworking" are words that Gloria uses to describe herself. She likes her school because everyone is so open. She trusts her teachers and is grateful that for the new choir program. If she could change one thing about Sellwood, she would increase the choices available to students.

Gloria's mom and dad, her teachers (especially her math teacher) have played an important role in her education and she wants to thank them for the encouragement and support that they have provided. If she could be anything she wanted she would be a general surgeon.

*If there was one thing I could change in the world, I would end child poverty and children being in need.*

Gloria Kitanga – May 2017



**Brynn Ladd**  
KairosPDX

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## Brynn Ladd

KairosPDX

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Brynn Ladd is a second-grade student at KairosPDX. She lives with her mom, dad and five-year-old brother.

Her teacher describes Brynn as "... endlessly curious and willing to devote the time and patience to go beyond regular learning. She currently leaves the room at least twice a week to receive more challenging instruction in math. In reading she is with a small group that delves into much deeper meaning often extending to universal connections."

Science is of particular interest for her, especially engineering. She has a natural curiosity and loves to learn. Brynn has earned three awards during this school year—recognition for Zest, Empathy and Optimism. She also represents Kairos as an ambassador, greeting distinguished guests.

Brynn often expands classroom discussions by relating topics to current news and sometimes by sharing information she has learned outside of school.

It is wonderful that Brynn has such supportive parents. They have opened the world of learning to her. Extra activities for Brynn include violin, ballet, swimming, soccer and choir. Brynn brings her whole self to whatever she is doing. At seven-years old, she is completing her second year of violin, she is a lead on her soccer team and has performed a solo in her choir's holiday event.

When asked about her easiest and hardest subjects, Brynn states that she is good at reading and math; Spanish is easy and robotics is hardest. Brynn says Friday is her favorite day because she has drawing and art. She says that she helps other students with math and she helps students when they are sad. "I give them a hug."

When asked what sentences best describe her, Brynn selected:

I believe in myself.

I can do anything if I try.

Right now, Brynn considers her future options to be wide open. She says she would like to be an architect or an artist or a children's doctor.

*An idea, I would like to share: Some people know something is wrong but they don't tell the people involved and it just makes the problem bigger.*

Brynn Ladd - KairosPDX



**Wilondja Mashimango**

Madison High School

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## Wilondja Mashimango

Madison High School

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Wilondja Mashimango is an eleventh-grade student at Madison High School. He was born in Tanzania and came to the United States three years ago with his dad, mother, two brothers, three sisters and a cousin.

Wilondja is described by his teacher as: "...thriving in high school. He speaks four languages and is intent on mastering his English. He works extremely hard in all of his classes. He has straight A's, stays for Extended Learning Time and after school support and volunteers at the Food Pantry each week."

Wilondja had the great challenge of coming to the United States from the Congo and beginning his secondary education as an English learner. He aspires to become a lawyer, and has worked to gain all the knowledge and skills he needs to be successful here. He has done all of that without compromising his family and cultural values and remains an open, happy, caring individual. Wilondja was featured in the local news segment "Kids doing Good Stuff" for his work at the Food Pantry. He is an active member of SUN school's after school programming and is currently on the Madison track team. Different staff members have nominated him for CREED recognitions (students embodying the values of Community, Respect, Education, Equity and Diversity) numerous times. His teachers describe him as "a wonderful member of all his classroom communities—always helpful, welcoming and kind."

Wilondja describes himself as "Patient", "Important" and "Loved". He has a 3.9 GPA and is a hard worker who stays engaged and remains committed to accomplishing his goals. His favorite subject is math and he enjoys playing golf and soccer. Wilondja plans to caddy for two years so that he will be eligible for a scholarship. In an effort to be prepared for college, he has become the co-leader of the Pan African Club, joined the choir, taken field trips to Seattle, Walla Walla, the University of Oregon and spent three days at Portland State University. Wilondja is definitely planning to go to college. He does not know exactly where he will go, but knows that he would prefer to go to college in Alabama or Georgia and he is determined to earn a Ph.D.

Before Wilondja graduates from Grant, he would like to take some computer classes because he is interested in computer programming. He also wants to explore how to become an airplane pilot.

*A thought I would like to share: The United States is made up of many different people and cultures. They should try to get together and teach each other.*

Wilondja Mashimango - May 2017



**Akil Mitchell**

Buckman Elementary School



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## Akil Mitchell

Buckman Elementary School

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Akil Mitchell is a fourth-grade student at Buckman Elementary School. He was born in Portland and lives with his mom. The teacher who nominated Akil describes him as a TAG (Talented and Gifted) student who “conveys all of the characteristics of a leader while maintaining a humble outlook... and this is apparent in the way he comprehends reading, science and social studies.” In addition, “Akil’s physical coordination and abilities are apparent and this will most likely lead to becoming an outstanding athlete.”

When asked about his grade point average, Akil says he has earned an average score of 92.4. He likes science and math and says he worked out of his comfort zone when he conducted an experiment that allowed him to determine what natural preservative will keep flowers fresh for the longest time. In fact, Akil won first prize at Buckman’s first annual science fair and his work was displayed at the May 20th science event at OMSI.

Akil describes himself as “athletic”, “kind” and “smart”. He loves science and math and would like to attend a STEM middle school. “My mom is my role model because she takes care of things and encourages me to push my limits and keep working until my work is finished.”

The dance teacher at Buckman. The teacher who nominated Akil acknowledges him for “being responsible and having ownership for himself. He has something special. I believe he can be a leader and I want to encourage him.... I see a young Barack Obama.”

If Akil could do anything he wants with his life, he says: “I would work at NASA doing math calculations.” He says that he is proud to be honored as Young, Gifted and Black.

*If there was one change I could make in this world:*

*I would give everybody a house.*

Akil Mitchell - May 2017



**Florence Monique**

Robert Gray Elementary School

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## Florence Monique

Robert Gray Elementary School

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Florence Monique is a sixth-grade student at Robert Gray Elementary School. She was born in a Tanzania refugee camp. Her dad, mother and brothers were born in the Congo. "FloJo", as she is often called by her friends and her family, came to the United States in 2010. She lives with her dad, mother, two older brothers and a one-year old nephew.

Flojo is described by her teacher as "a powerful personality that lights up a room. She is dramatic and hilarious, yet always kind, courteous and helpful. Flojo would excel as an actor, given the chance. She has scores of "characters" that she plays with complete commitment. She throws herself into any assignment or project with sincerity and authenticity. Flojo learned English at four years of age; however, she speaks fluent Swahili and has been an indispensable ambassador for our new students."

"Kind", "passionate," and "crazy" are words that Flojo uses to describe herself. When asked about her grades, she says that she gets mostly A's and two B's. She works hard, turns in all of her homework and asks lots of questions in class. Her favorite subjects are drama, art and music. She also loves to play soccer and basketball. Flojo says she shares her knowledge, skills and talents with other students by helping them learn. She is grateful to ELD (English Language Development) for helping her become more proficient in English and she is very thankful for the support she receives from her family, especially the help she has received from her 19-year old brother.

Gabrielle ("Gabby") Douglas, an American artistic gymnast who won an Olympic gold medal, is Flojo's role model. Gabby worked very hard to become the best. She was determined to succeed and even had to leave her family to accomplish her goal.

As for additional things Flojo would like to learn, she says that she is very interested in learning the French language because French is spoken in the Congo and she would also love to learn about animals.

*I love Robert Gray Middle School because: You can be anybody in my school and no one will judge you!*

Florence Monique - May 2017



**Michael Morgan**

Benson Polytechnic High School

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## Michael Morgan

Benson Polytechnic High School

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Michael Morgan is an eleventh-grade student at Benson Polytechnic High School. He was born in Portland and lives with his mom, stepdad, and two younger sisters.

Michael is described as, “an amazing student and member of the Benson community.” He always represents himself, his family and his community with the utmost respect. Michael’s not only an A student, he is a double major—architecture and construction, and a member of Benson football and track teams. Michael’s mom was a 16-year old high school student when she had him. Despite this, she managed to complete her high school diploma on time. Michael was later raised by his grandmother while his mother went to serve her country in the military. He is now not only an awesome student but an incredible role model to his two younger sisters. While Michael doesn’t have room in his schedule for BHS’s Leadership class, he regularly works alongside the Leadership students to help coordinate events in the building. In addition to his athletics, Michael participates in the ACE Mentorship Program (for students interested in Architecture, Construction and Engineering). Michael contributes to his community by being such a strong model for his peers. He balances all of these responsibilities and continues to maintain a 4.0 GPA with a rigorous course load. Michael is one of the few students I have had that gives 100% to everything that he does. He never has an excuse and is a trustworthy student.

Michael describes himself as “Athletic”, “Leader” and “Smart”. He is proud to have served on the varsity teams for football, baseball, Track and field since his freshman year. He loves football but he also enjoys math—numbers, equations, and connections with life. One regret is that he did not take a math-based program earlier. Michael plans to go to college and his ultimate goal is to become an astronaut.

Without a doubt, Michael identifies his mother as his role model and describes her as “a fighter”. “She perseveres through everything. She is selfless, smart, strategic and bold. Though she was young when she had me, she took care of me, she persevered and overcame financial problems.”

As Michael reflects on his high school experience, he is pleased that he chose Benson. He met new people and appreciates the opportunity to gain exposure to different careers. He is grateful for the support he has received from his parents, Olivia Morgan (counselor), Jarrod Lampert (advisor), as well as his coaches and close friends.

*Thoughts that I would like to share: Stay true to yourself. Don't be someone you are not. Don't be intimidated about things you cannot do.*

Michael Morgan - May 2017



**Mucai Muthubi**  
Cleveland High School

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## Mucaï Muthubi

Cleveland High School

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Mucaï Muthubi is an eleventh-grade student at Cleveland High School. He was born in Berkley, California. He lives with his mom, sister and one brother. His older brother does not live with the family.

Mucaï is an activist and a Pan Africanist. He is a writer of fiction and poetry. "Militant," "reflective" and "friendly" are words Mucaï uses to describe himself. It should be noted that his first name (Mucaï) means influencer. He is described by his teacher as an, "extremely dedicated student and community member of Cleveland community." Another teacher describes him as, "an intelligent, caring, proud young man." He has a 3.5 GPA.

Mucaï is active in AVID, the Black Student Union, Poetry Club., and multiple extra-curricular sports and clubs. He has been a true advocate for the rights of students of color and is part of the C.A.R.E. equity team. He is a motivated student, taking eight classes as a junior with five of the classes being IB. Teachers and peers alike sing his praises on a daily basis.

In addition to the reading Mucaï does for his classes, he reads and learns independently and fills in what he considers to be his own gaps. This year Mucaï became passionate about Black Lives Matter and the teachings and biography of Malcolm X. This was augmented by the "life changing" experience at the Selma Bridge Crossing Jubilee. Racial equality is at Mucaï's core and he brings this sense of purpose to his studies and to his interactions with others. Mucaï's peers look up to him. He is very influential. He conducts himself in a mature, caring and intelligent manner throughout the school.

Mucaï encourages other students to take advantage of programs and courses that might benefit them. He motivated three African American students to join an AVID class.

When Mucaï is asked who has contributed to his success, he responds, "my mom, my friends and Ms. Harville (linguistics teacher)." He also wants to extend his thanks to those individuals who have supported him: mom, dad, and friends—Afandi, Afil, Ali, Amil, George, and Nurdin.

When Mucaï is asked about college, he says that he may go back home and go to college or he may go to college in California.

*If there was one change I could make in this world, I would: Change the mentality of Black people.*

Mucaï Muthubi - May 2017



**Dylan Palmer**  
Grant High School

EST. 2016 **FORWARD** Grant High School



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## Dylan Palmer

Grant High School

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Dylan Palmer is a twelfth-grade student at Grant High School. He was born in Portland and lives with his mom, dad and twin sister.

“Dylan is a leader whose actions have impacted the environment at Grant High School by placing the topic of RACE and EQUITY on the table. He has the ability to empathize with different races, genders, and sexual orientations. He is described by a Grant faculty member as having: “... a strong sense of morality and fairness. He works constantly to protect the interests of others when he believes that they are being treated unfairly or inequitably. He raises his voice in support of others and for what he believes, even though it is not the most popular choice.”

“It was in his junior year that Dylan began pursuing racial justice. He was vice president of the Black Student Union. He witnessed a racist incident while playing soccer.” Dylan says: ‘I used this incident to push forward conversations.’ The result was the formation of RACE FORWARD and the STUDENT EQUITY TEAM a committee in the student government class and an equity class which he initiated. The result is that conversations that address race are scheduled several times during the school year. Dylan’s efforts began a community wide discussion, despite the social backlash. “This will be Dylan’s lasting legacy—to continue to give voice to racial discussions and not avoid tough conversations. Dylan has courage and wisdom beyond his years.”

“Dylan is incredibly talented and creative. He has enjoyed joining his activism with his interest in music and creating music with a social conscience. He makes music weekly as an outlet of his thoughts.”

“Leader”, “Creative” and “Mature” are words Dylan uses to describe himself. He wears many hats and labels. He is a scholar who has earned a 3.8 GPA; he is an athlete (varsity soccer). Other labels include: Musician – who plays many different instruments; Rap producer; Journalist for the Grant Magazine.

As Dylan shares his accomplishments, he also provides a list of people he would like to thank: Karl Acker (BSU advisor); the Grant administration for allowing collaboration and a good environment to pursue racial and social justice; Dr. Chris Edmin, Columbia University (Racial Justice); Bryan Stevenson (appeal lawyer for racial justice); and his parents for supporting him and always making him think.

Dylan will be going to New York University where he will major in political science and Africana studies. He may become a civil rights or constitutional lawyer.

*An idea I wish to share: Leadership: Lead by example; Respect People.*  
Dylan Palmer - May 2017



**Marquis Penn**  
Grant High School

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## Marquis Penn

Grant High School

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Marquis Penn is a tenth-grade student at Grant High School. He was born in Portland and he lives with his mom, dad, and two older brothers.

An educator from Grant High School wrote the following about Marquis: "As an educator, a coach and a community member, I am relieved to know that our future is in the hands of such a capable leader. Most of the young men I have the pleasure of working with feel their athletic ability will get them further than their academic status, but not Marquis. It is truly refreshing to see this Young, Gifted and Black male take a solid interest in his academic future."

Marquis is a student athlete with a 3.5 GPA. He has talents across the academic disciplines with strengths in math and science. He is highly ambitious and plans to become a petroleum engineer. Marquis says that his first time in the Math, Science and Engineering (MSE) Academy helped him to decide what he wants to do with his life.

When asked what contributes to his academic achievement, Marquis says his work ethic and the fact that he is a critical thinker are crucial. "Blissful", "intelligent" and "determined" are words that Marquis uses to describe himself. He says that Grant's programs provide him a variety of opportunities and that Karl Acker (MSE) as well as most of the staff at Grant are very helpful.

Marquis manages his time. He has juggled many involvements and responsibilities from athletics, to volunteer work for the community, to taking an active role in the Black Student Union. He has helped with other students to plan and implement Black History Month, as well as participated in the Race Forward discussions. SEI has been a part of Marquis' life since he was in second grade and he remains a part of the male leadership group.

Though Marquis is only a sophomore, he has already accomplished a great deal. A number of staff at Grant is watching to see what he will accomplish during his junior and senior years. One of which said "he has such heart and dedication and makes all the things he does look effortless."

*If there was one I could make in the world: I would end POVERTY.*

Marquis Penn - May 2017



**Solianna Seid**

Martin Luther King Jr. School

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## Solianna Seid

Martin Luther King Jr. School

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Solianna Seid is a first-grade student at Martin Luther King Jr. School. She was born in Portland and lives with her mom, dad, one sister, one brother and her aunt. She says that she loves learning and is proud that she speaks three languages—English and Chinese at school and Amharic and English at home.

Solianna is described by her teacher as, “sweet, hard-working and strong in almost every subject. In my Chinese Immersion classroom, she stands out in reading and writing. At mid-term assessment, I tested her 150 Chinese words which is the goal by the end of first grade and she could recognize 112 words. That is impressive. Solianna also tries her best to write and read Chinese as much as she can. She always asks if she can write during break time! Determined to learn Chinese, Solianna makes sure that she listens to the audio tapes. She completes her homework and afternoon package for the week earlier than other students.”

Solianna is identified as a TAG (Talented and Gifted) student. She says, “I love to learn. I work hard. I can do anything if I try hard.” Reading, writing, math and PE are the subjects that Solianna likes the best. When she thinks about math, Solianna says that she would like to learn about fractions. She finds dance her most difficult class and PE her easiest class. Playing soccer is one of the things Solianna does to have fun.

Martin Luther King Jr. School allows Solianna to learn new things and have fun; however, she says that she wishes her school had a science room and a technology room. It is important that she learn as much as she can because she is determined to be a doctor when she becomes an adult.

Solianna says she loves her teachers and she considers her mom and dad to be her role models because they teach her and they encourage and support her learning.

*If there is one change I could make in the world: I would make sure that everyone treats one another equally.*

Solianna Seid - May 2017



**Bobbie Steen**

Alliance High School at Meek

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## Bobbie Steen

Alliance High School at Meek

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Bobbie Steen is a twelfth-grade student at Alliance High School at Meek. She was born in Portland and lives with her mother.

Bobbie Steen is an outstanding student who has overcome challenges and become a leader among her peers. She is committed to doing her very best and always tries to do what is right. Her grades are all A's and B's and she is prepared to enter a four-year college.

She will be a first-generation college student.

The teacher who nominated Bobbie says, "she has been an advocate for Alliance High School at Meek. Bobbie testified at a Portland Public Schools Board of Education meeting regarding the need for Alliance High School at Meek to have better facilities."

Bobbie is active in Student Leadership, Drama, Documentary Club and she has also been involved in Art Club. Her volunteer activities include working with the Sunshine Division during holidays (e.g., Thanksgiving and Christmas). She has also volunteered with the Buckman Elementary School SUN program to support the arts.

"Open-minded", "caring", and "organized" are the words that Bobbie uses to describe herself. She shares that her family pushes her to her limit and challenges her to pursue excellence. Math and science are the subjects she likes best. "They challenge me in a good way." As she reflects on her education, she realizes that she has a strong desire to experience other cultures. That is an area she might pursue as she prepares for college.

As Bobbie thinks about who has encouraged her and contributed to her success, she says she realizes that her mom has always been there for her. She is her biggest fan.

Graduation is approaching and Bobbie says that she wants to thank the teachers and staff at Alliance High School at Meek and Central Catholic and, of course, her mom. She is also grateful for the experience she had going to Chicago to take art classes at an art institute. Being away from home in a new city provided her a glimpse of being independent. That opportunity has been a vital part of her educational experience.

Bobbie has just found employment at Forever 21. She has not yet decided which college she will attend.

*A thought I would like to share: Life may have its ups and downs but everything happens for a reason.*

Bobbie Steen - May 2017



**Tehya (Skylar) Tate**

Franklin High School





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## Tehya (Skylar) Tate

Franklin High School

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Tehya (Skylar) Tate is a twelfth-grade student at Franklin High School. She was born in Portland and lives with her mom. Her dad is incarcerated and two older sisters no longer live at home. Her younger brother died last year.

In spite of the challenges that Skylar has faced, she has never given up. She faces adversity head on. She pushes through her pain and says, "I am a pretty strong girl!" She admits that she hardly knows her father because he has been in prison nearly half of her life. She is determined to leave adversity behind and work toward building better relationships. Skylar says she has a wonderful relationship with her mother. In fact, she considers her mom to be her best friend.

Skylar is President of the Black Student Union; she says that she takes pride in being Black. She is an advocate for equality and works hard to ensure that all students in Franklin are treated with respect. Skylar involves herself in many activities to bring out the best school spirit for Franklin High School. She is a member of the Link Crew and mentors freshmen to help them connect to the high school. She wants them to be connected and experience success in school. Her teacher describes her as having a big heart and commends her for finding ways to help others.

Volunteering with Girl Scouts to help people experiencing homelessness and working in the shelter with children are activities that Skylar finds rewarding. She is selfless when it comes to seeing a need and working with others to help people receive assistance. Skylar believes when she is helping, she is actually helping herself.

In addition to overcoming adversity, working to help students in her school and doing work in the community, Skylar has high academic achievement. She is enrolled in the AP Scholars program at Franklin and challenges herself by taking AP Psychology, AP English and African American History. She will incorporate the information about her culture in her English teaching in the future.

Skylar enjoys her English class. She credits Ms. Wong, her English teacher, with fueling her desire to become an English teacher. She says that Franklin's faculty and staff have been very supportive and she has had a lot of opportunities to learn.

Looking forward, Skylar plans to go to Oregon State University where she will major in English and Education. She wants to thank her mom, dad, sisters, Mike Waller (Student Success Advocate) and Ms. Wong because she could not have done it without their support.

*If there was one change I could make in the world:*

*Get rid of RACISM... It grinds my gears!*

Tehya (Skylar) Tate - May 2017



**Henok Techeste**

Lincoln High School

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## Henok Techeste

Lincoln High School

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Henok Techeste is a senior at Lincoln High School. He was born in Asmara Eritrea Africa. He lives with his father.

Henok is described as a dedicated, motivated, caring and intelligent student. He has a 3.8 GPA. He is a founding member and president of Brothers of Color, and a member of the Black Student Union and the Black Male Achievement Program. He has been a volunteer tutor at Faubion, King and West Sylvan schools. He has also completed an internship with the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

When asked what has contributed to his academic achievement, Henok said, "Hard work, family expectations and pressure from my brother. Henok enjoys Math (IB pre-calculus), IB physics, basketball, playing piano and Brothers of Color.

"Risk-Taker," "Thoughtful," and "Motivated" are words that Henok uses to describe himself. He says that his dad is his role model, having been there for him all the time, "If it were not for my dad, I would not be here," Henok says. "My dad helps him find balance."

Henok says he likes Lincoln, "The school has lots of resources compared to other schools. Also, the staff want you to succeed. Teachers help you and the counselors are great."

As Henok thinks about preparing to go to college, he says that AVID tutoring, AP classes, electrical engineering college courses, and the Bridge Camp at Oregon State University have helped him. He is grateful and would like to thank his dad, Ms. Guzman (counselor), James McKee (advisor), and all of the teachers who have provided their valuable assistance.

Looking ahead, Henok plans to go to OSU. He intends to earn a master's degree and a Ph.D.

*If there was one change I could make in the world, I would: Ensure that all students have access to the same education.*

Henok Techeste - May 2017



**Alanna Valerio Mendieta**

Sellwood Middle School



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## Alanna Valerio Mendieta

Sellwood Middle School

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Alanna Valerio Mendieta is an eighth-grade student at Sellwood Middle School. She was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic and came to the United States at the age of nine. She lives with her mom, dad and one brother.

Alanna is described by the teacher who nominated her for the Young, Gifted and Black award as, "Brilliant, a bilingual student who is extremely talented, creative and brave. Her writing voice is beautiful. Alanna will not give up or shrink from threat, challenge, or difficulty. She will speak up for what is right, even if there is opposition. She will act on her convictions even if it is unpopular."

In sixth grade, Alanna won the Spanish Spelling Bee for Mt. Tabor and for PPS, and went on to compete in the State competition in Forest Grove. She led last year's stop Bullying campaign with Future Hispanic Leaders/ Youth Power Club. In addition, she organized a food drive for the poor in partnership with St. Vincent DePaul Food Bank.

"Alanna is talented and gifted and skilled in various domains of life -- from nature to art to mathematics to science to language (English and Spanish), to everyday experiences. She notices and appreciates excellence."

Her one successful year in the English as a Second Language program at Atkinson Elementary School is a source of pride for Alanna. She attributes her success to, "Working really hard, having the support of friends, and not stressing myself out." Though Alanna is bilingual, she says would like to learn additional languages. Reading, playing the guitar and playing soccer are things she does in her spare time. She describes herself as, "smart, optimistic, and outgoing."

Alanna says her mom is her role model, "Mom is proud of who she proud of her African race. She doesn't let other people bring her down. Alanna says "Plus, she always has a smile on her face and tries to look on the bright side even when things are tough."

*A thought or idea I would like to share: Weird is good; different is Awesome.*  
Alanna Valerio Mendieta - May 2017



**Jazzmine Watkins**

Franklin High School

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## Jazzmine Watkins

Franklin High School

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Jazzmine Watkins is a senior at Franklin High School. She was born in Fountain Valley, California. She and her sister live with their great aunt.

Jazzmine is enrolled in the AP Scholars program at Franklin. Her ultimate goal is to become a registered nurse. Because her parents are experiencing financial difficulties and they are unable to provide a stable environment for Jazzmine and her sister, their great aunt has provided them a place to live. To meet some of her basic needs, Jazzmine worked two jobs. She was a general assistant at an antique store and a game room attendant at an arcade. At the present times she is still employed by the arcade. Things are difficult but she intends to keep up with her school work, participate in school activities and still find time to volunteer.

AP psychology, Medical terminology (Science and English), Anatomy and Physiology are required classes for the medical field. To ensure that she does not fall behind, Jazzmine sets aside time to study. She also makes sure that she asks questions in class so that she is clear about what is expected. While things are tough, Jazzmine maintains her focus and thus far she has been able to maintain her 3.77 GPA.

Jazzmine completed her volunteer experiences through the Communicare class during her junior year. Each year she joins the Red Cross at Franklin and helps support the blood drive.

With all of the challenges Jazzmine faces, she is determined to beat the odds. She is concerned about her parents and hopes that they will be able to find a place to live. Meanwhile, each day she maps out what it will take for her to accomplish her goals.

Jazzmine is grateful and appreciative of everything she is learning in the AP Scholars program. Her only regret is that she didn't have time to take AP statistics and AP biology.

Nonetheless, Jazzmine will be the first person in her family to finish high school and go on to college. She will attend the University of Portland where she intends to pursue a degree in nursing.

*A thought I would like to share: You can't change people unless they want to be changed.*

Jazzmine Watkins - May 2017



**Kamaria Watson**  
Roosevelt High School



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## Kamaria Watson

Roosevelt High School

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Kamaria Watson is a twelfth-grade student at Roosevelt High School. She was born in Portland and lives with her mom and three sisters.

Kamaria is described as a young woman who “comes from a family of strong women and sees herself as a role model. She takes her accomplishments seriously because she knows her young siblings are watching her, just as she watched her older sister graduate a year early and enroll in a Historically Black University. As a young girl, she learned the value of keeping herself engaged in school and, more specifically, the value of helping others.”

While caring for her siblings, Kamaria still made time to take on a role as a Peer Helper, mentoring 9th graders while she was in her sophomore year, a leadership role with Climate Oregon, a non-profit that advocates to the governor regarding the impacts of global warming, all the while making time to volunteer at her mother’s child care facility. Thick-skinned, a perfectionist and multi-tasker, Kamaria simultaneously manages playing a mediator role within her family and becoming a top student in school. Her mother describes her as someone who doesn’t know what it means to give less than 100% of her effort.”

Kamaria’s commitment to producing high quality work has paid off. She has a 4.0 GPA and is valedictorian for her class. She says that her mom is her role model and sets the tone by encouraging her to be independent, advocate for herself and work for what she wants.

Math, biology and art are the subjects Kamaria likes most. She is committed to working for social justice and as a student athlete, she enjoys volleyball. “Caring”, “Ambitious” and “Determined” are words that Kamaria uses to describe herself. All of the tuition for her bachelor’s degree with the exception of \$2,000 is available to her. She will attend Xavier (an historically Black university in Louisiana). She is confident she will become “a doctor who focuses on maternal fetal medicine so I can help women who are experiencing high-risk pregnancies.”

What Kamaria likes most about Roosevelt High School is the amount of acceptance there is toward diversity, and the openness. She does wish, however, that faculty of her school was more diverse. As she prepares for graduation from high school, Kamaria says that she wants to thank her family, DeLaSalle North Catholic High School and Roosevelt High School communities for their support.

*If there was one change I could make in the world: I want people to lose their pride and be more open ...and accept other people.*

Kamaria Watson - May 2017



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

Reiko Williams, creator and curator

Antonio Lopez, Assistant Superintendent

Julie Esparza Brown, Board Member

Dr. Carolyn Leonard, researcher and writer

Marquis Johnson-Bey, photographer

Louise Tollisen and Richard Martin, graphic designer

Jo Humphrey and Jeremiah Wade, printing support

Elona Wilson, Harry Esteve and Jon Coney, editing support

Support Staff: Andrea Wade, Princess Johnson, Ezell Watson III, Robbie Davis, Terry Proctor, Daniel Green, Francisco Garcia, Ramzi Adas, Lynn Faulkenberry, Pamela Jordan, Susan Poscharscky, Lorenzo Poe, Rosanne Powell, Lindsay Trapp, Chris Palodichuk, David Northfield, Rosie Fiallo and Duane Hill

In 1969 Nina Simone sang these words “To be young gifted and Black, oh what a lovely precious dream. To be young gifted and Black, open your heart to what I mean.” The song quickly became a civil rights anthem as it encouraged Black children to recognize their intelligence, strength and beauty. In 2017 Portland Public Schools strives to send a similar message by honoring 30 students at the 8th Annual Young, Gift and Black ceremony.

The Young, Gifted and Black ceremony was founded on love. Love for Black people, the Black community and educational equality for Black children. It is far too often this population is defined by negative perceptions and a troubled past. The doom and gloom story narrated by daunting statistics can no longer be our guide. The Young, Gifted and Black ceremony provides a refreshing counter narrative in the face racism, low expectations and cultural isolation. Highlighting these positive narratives provides hope that every Black child will access their personal greatness and experience educational success.

It is with extreme enthusiasm that I applaud this year’s honorees and nominees. May we always encourage their hearts and provide a light for their path. “To be young gifted and black, oh what a lovely precious dream. To be young gifted and Black, open your heart to what I mean.

**Keith Dempsey, PhD**

Graduate of Woodlawn Elementary School

Graduate of Harriet Tubman Middle School

Graduate of Benson High School