

# RARE RISING STARS

The UK's Top 16 Black Students

rare

DIVERSITY  
RECRUITMENT  
EXCELLENCE

In association with **SLAUGHTER AND MAY**





---

# Foreword

---



It gives me enormous pleasure to introduce this first edition of Rare Rising Stars.

Since starting Rare Recruitment four years ago I have met many enormously impressive people, and Rare has helped place hundreds of students in internships and jobs. By definition though, we focus on people looking for employment. One of the great pleasures of this project has been that we have discovered so many more people who aren't looking for jobs. This list contains many outstanding black success stories of people who don't want to work for anyone else - entrepreneurs, designers, sportspeople - as well as those who have excelled in academia and student politics. Out of the hundreds of thousands of black students at UK universities, we have highlighted 16. Each of these people has a remarkable story which we are proud to honour.

The Stars have been ranked according to the following criteria: determination, achievement, contribution to community or society, initiative and leadership, and ability to perform at a high level in more than one area. We are delighted that we have as judges two of the country's most prominent black leaders, Trevor Phillips and Jean Tomlin. Trevor is currently Chair of the Commission for Equality and Human Rights. His long and varied career includes achievements in television, where he both produced and presented programmes, and politics, where he chaired the London Assembly. Jean is the HR Director for London 2012, and worked previously at companies including Ford and Marks and Spencer, where she was a Board Director at the time of Phillip Green's abortive takeover. Between them, Jean and Trevor bring unparalleled knowledge of government, business, sport, politics, media and the cultural industries. I want to thank Jean and Trevor for their help in judging the 30+ candidates we put forward for inclusion on the list.

I also want to thank the Rare team of Rachel Kerr, Esther Odida, and Yewande Sokan, who have worked tirelessly over several months to compile this list.

Finally I want to thank Slaughter and May for sponsoring this booklet. Slaughter and May have worked with Rare for the last three years and have shown themselves to be truly committed to diversity, hiring upwards of two dozen Rare candidates onto vacation schemes and training contracts.

I hope you enjoy reading this document. If there is anyone who isn't on this year's list who you think might merit inclusion on next year's, feel free to email us. The address is [risingstars@rarerecruitment.co.uk](mailto:risingstars@rarerecruitment.co.uk).

**Raphael Mokades**  
Managing Director

---

# Contents

---

---

## The Judges

---

Trevor Phillips  
Jean Tomlin 05

---

Eligibility and Quotations 06, 07

---

## The Finalists

Bukky Oyebade  
Charles Alonge 08

Louis Antwi  
Jalil Saheeb 09

Lateef Joseph Maynard  
Dean Carby 10

Ruth Oluwayimika Awogbade  
Simbarashe Chiguma 11

Winifred Acheampong  
YolanDa Brown 12

Samuel Kasumu  
Olawale Gbaja-Biamila 13

Lewis Iwu  
Jennifer Larbie 14

Melba Mwanje  
Tom Chigbo 15

---

Are You Rare? 16

---

Final Thanks 17

---



---

# The Judges

---

## Trevor Phillips

---



Trevor Phillips is the co-founder of the Equate Organisation, the social change consultancy, and a Director of Pepper Productions, founded in 1995. Trevor has been a senior executive figure in the TV industry for nearly two decades, serving as Head of Current Affairs for London Weekend Television and Granada TV.

He remains a respected creative leader in the industry as a Vice President of the Royal Television Society. Trevor has been a regular writer and columnist for several of the UK's principal national newspapers, writing for the Guardian, Independent, the Mail and the Telegraph amongst others. He also wrote a column for the minority weekly, The Voice. On 8 September 2006, Trevor was appointed Chair of the new Equality and Human Rights Commission. Trevor was previously Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) from 1 March 2003. Prior to this he had been elected as a member of the Greater London Authority in May 2000, and became Chair of the Assembly later that month.

Born in London in 1953, Trevor attended secondary school in Georgetown, Guyana, and then studied chemistry at Imperial College London. Between 1978 and 1980, he was President of The National Union of Students. At present, he is a board member of Aldeburgh Productions and The Bernie Grant Centre in Tottenham. He is a patron of The Sickle Cell Society. Between 1993 and 1998 Trevor was Chair of the Runnymede Trust. From 1993 to 1997 he was Chair of the London Arts Board.

In 2007 he received the award of Chevalier de la Legion D'Honneur to add to the OBE he won in 1998. He holds several honorary degrees and fellowships.

---

## Jean Tomlin

---



Jean Tomlin is the HR Director for The London 2012 Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. Prior to joining London 2012, she was an advisor to the BBC and Group HR Director at Marks & Spencer plc. Previous roles include HR Director of Egg plc and Sales and Operations Director of Prudential Direct. She started her career as a graduate trainee at Ford, starting in personnel, training and labour relations.

Jean has held a number of non-executive roles, including being a Board member of the Greenwich Healthcare Trust and the Student Loans Company. She is a member of the Qualifications and Curriculum Advisory Board, the Race Relations Advisory Group, a Commissioner for Judicial Appointments and a Trustee of CIDA (a South African self-funding university).

Jean is also a Companion of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and was until recently a member of the CIPD Enterprise Board.

---

# Eligibility and Quotations

---

We have conducted a nation-wide search for the UK's most outstanding black students. Eligible candidates had to be in full-time higher education and graduating in 2008 (plus a sabbatical year), or later. The finalists have also excelled in their respective areas of music, poetry, politics, business, charity, athletics, drama and academics.

The assessment process included a personal interview with each candidate. Here are some of our favourite quotations...

---

“People should find something they love doing – there’s nothing worse than not trying and never knowing.” Alfred Lewis Enoch, Oxford University

---

“My fashion teachers really respected my work ethic: heavily pregnant but the first to arrive and last to leave.” Bukky Oyeade, University of Rochester

---

“I represent people who have had hard times and keep going. No matter where you come from, you can still achieve and be educated. I live in Stockwell, South London. I’m not in a gang, I’ve never been arrested, and I’ve started my own company. Regardless of my background, I chose to achieve.” Charles Alonge, University of Brunel

---

“It was something that my Dad said that really made me think. He said “There’s nothing more valuable than an educated mind. I am a rose that grew out of concrete.” Jalil Saheeb, London Metropolitan University

---

“I really just want to be involved in helping and facilitating positive change and raising the profile and aspirations of black people.” Jennifer Larbie, University of Birmingham

---

“If you are good enough at something then nothing can stop you.” Lewis Iwu, University of Oxford

---

---

“I don’t think many young people in life are willing to take risks and if they do, it’s the wrong kind of risk.” Lateef Joseph Maynard, King’s College, University of London

---

“I want to look back and say I did something great... My aim is to do something that will outlive me.” Kwaku Awuku, London School of Economics

---

“I’m proud that I am always trying to fulfil my potential, I have never stopped. I am someone who represents what can be achieved when you never give up.” Melba Mwanje, University of Oxford

---

“If there’s one thing uni has taught me it is that you have a choice - you have to be true to yourself. If you live for somebody else, you can never be happy.” Olawale Gbaja–Biamila, London School of Economics

---

“There are days when I would just love to do nothing, but this is often not an option. In my opinion the results are more rewarding than the lie-ins.” Ruth Awogbade, University of Durham

---

## The Finalists

---

Potential Rare Rising Stars were interviewed and a short biography of each candidate was written. These biographies were sent to our judges who scored the candidates on the following criteria: determination, achievement, contribution to community or society, initiative and leadership, and ability to perform at a high level in more than one area.

The highest scoring sixteen candidates have made this list, and the top five have been given special recognition.

---

## Bukky Oyeade

---

University of Rochester, BA Fashion Design  
Fashion Designer

---

Bukky has always known that she wanted to pursue fashion within higher education. She felt that the only way to become an expert in her field was to find inspiration and technical training from those actually working within the industry. One of Bukky's earliest achievements took place when she was just 14 years old. At school she won the chance to work with leading urban designer Wale Adeyemi on a collection that would be featured in the UK's number one high street store, Topshop.

She was invited for interviews on Radio One and with BBC Television. 'It was so strange walking into one of London's largest high street stores and seeing a huge billboard with my face on it. I was so young but now I look back and think - what an honour!' Bukky defines her signature style as very edgy. She prides her designs on their tailored cuts: 'they really compliment the figure of a woman and are very high fashion.' 'I hate simple... for me innovation is key.' Bukky is also a young, single mother. 'My fashion teachers really respected my work ethic: heavily pregnant but the first to arrive and last to leave the college. My passion for fashion and belief in what I was going to do saw me through.' Her ultimate goal is to be a well known fashion designer successfully running her own business. Bukky is most proud of her ability to commit herself to her work despite external hindrances and pressures. She feels she has mastered the ability of accepting criticism in a positive way and wants to continue not to take life too seriously but have fun and enjoy what she does. 'I don't see the worth in achieving unless it can somehow motivate, help or inspire others.'




---

## Charles Alonge

---

University of Brunel, Bsc Information Systems  
Entrepreneur - King Ent

---

Charles, or 'King Charles' as he's known on the events scene, organises some of the biggest student events in the UK. Charles' company, King Ent, is behind some of the most popular, successful and profitable student parties: Uni Jam, Uni House, I ♥ Uni and Roller Jam - to name just a few. Students often travel on coaches from all over the UK to attend King Ent events. The company was founded by Charles in January 2008 with two friends. Since then, he has organised 19 events, the biggest of these attracting around 2700 people. He's in charge of finding venues and negotiating deposits, booking DJs, finding ticket reps to sell at universities across the country and ensuring everything runs smoothly on the night. Charles has achieved all this despite obstacles: 'I was born with sickle cell anaemia. Fortunately it doesn't affect me as badly as it could, but I get tired quite easily.'

Charles attended Graveney secondary school in Tooting before moving on to St Francis Xavier Sixth Form College in Clapham. In 10 years time he still wants to be organising events but on a bigger, more commercial scale. Charles has big entrepreneurial plans and advises others to 'find a mentor and get them to give you help and advice. I was fortunate to have my brother's friends. The more I do, the more I learn.' When asked what made him a Rising Star Charles had this to say: 'I represent people who have had hard times and keep going. No matter where you come from, you can still achieve and be educated. I live in Stockwell, South London. I'm not in a gang, I've never been arrested, and I've started my own company. Regardless of my background, I choose to achieve.'



---

## Louis Antwi

University of Warwick, BEng Engineering

Poet

---

In addition to his academic aptitude, Louis is a gifted young poet. In 2005, he was invited to perform at a Chris Ofili exhibition. He made such an impression that an employee of the Commission for Racial Equality forwarded his name to perform at the Houses of Parliament. In 2007 he was invited to Parliament where he recited a poem on the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the abolition of slavery, becoming the youngest person to present poetry at the event. In 2007, Louis became frustrated with the lack of creative outlets for young poets. He set up a highly successful poetry showcase in Camden called 'Process.' Securing sponsorship was particularly difficult: 'We had had a number of preliminary meetings with Roundhouse, but they did not have the funding to pay for our event. Strangely, at a later date, they called me back saying that they had found a sponsor.' The sponsor however, wished to remain anonymous. To this day Louis still has no idea who his mystery sponsor is. Louis is proudest of starting up 'Process' and excelling academically despite his working class background. His parents are his main inspiration: 'They always encouraged me to aim for the very best and never settle.' In the summer of 2009, Louis aims to launch a community initiative called 'People You Should Know.' 'I come across a lot of very talented young people who have very little idea what to do with their talent. Most commonly they will have a back catalogue of their work (whether poems, songs, fashion designs etc) but they're waiting around for their break.' Louis aims to build up a creative network that will put these young people in contact with the right industry people.




---

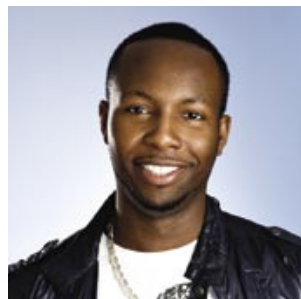
## Jalil Saheeb

London Metropolitan University, BA Music and Media

Management, Musician

---

From an early age Jalil wanted to work in music. But his interest wasn't just in performance; he wanted to understand the process behind making music and learn how the industry operated. University was not a natural progression for Jalil. He made it clear to his parents that he didn't think higher education was for him. Negative feedback from teachers and mentors had severely affected his confidence. 'It was something that my Dad said that really made me think. He said "There's nothing more valuable than an educated mind".' It was whilst at university that Jalil became a Christian; he plans to complete a Masters in the U.S in Divinity. His newfound faith affected his music and Jalil (stage name JayEss) vowed to make music that was uplifting, inspirational and edifying. His career progression and his gospel flavoured lyrics have been well received. JayEss became a MOBO Award finalist and he rubbed shoulders with the likes of Diana Ross, Lil' Kim and rapper DMX at the event. He is also the first Christian rapper to have a distribution deal with UK record stores (Zavvi, Virgin and HMV included). One of his proudest moments was seeing his single in HMV: 'No other UK Christian rapper had achieved that. For me, it was just great to get my foot in the door. It's really humbling for me, because I know it was God's doing and not my own.' In addition to his musical achievements JayEss also runs his own design company 'JayEss Designs.' 'Graphic design was another one of my passions,' he said. He has designed MySpace pages and websites for many UK Gospel heavyweights. He is most proud of his faith and, despite his many struggles, of finishing university. 'I am a rose that grew out of the concrete' he says.



## Lateef Joseph Maynard

**King's College London, BA English Language and Communications, Entrepreneur & Film Maker**

Lateef was born in London and is currently a student at King's College, University of London. Lateef's ultimate ambition is to reach Partner level as an Advertising Executive. Outside of this, Lateef has excelled in the realms of film and event management. In his first year he directed a film entitled 'Change in the UK'. This film featured the mothers of knife crime victims. The film documented their fears and hopes for the future of the UK's street culture. 'What really blew me away was the response the film got.' The film was featured in the King's College Academic Publication which is sent to all of the university's alumni. A full feature was also written up on the film in 'The London Student' - a student publication which is sent out monthly to every university within London. 'I think one of my proudest moments ever was when a girl from Canada got in touch with me after seeing the film and expressed just how much it had touched her.' In his second year of university he ran a highly successful student night in Holborn. 'A lot of the contracts we entered into with these clubs were high profit but high risk. It took a huge deal of motivation, promotion and team work to ensure the events were successful every time.' Having successfully organised these nights Lateef now believes that there are certain benefits that come from his ambitious approach. 'I don't think many young people in life are willing to take risks and if they do, it's the wrong kind of risk.' But, with his hard work ethic and self belief, Lateef has proven that risk taking can reap many rewards.



## Dean Carby

**Brunel University, Bsc Biomedical Science  
Entrepreneur - Voice 'n' Vibes**

Dean is a part time professional DJ, event organiser and promoter with big plans. His collective is known as Voice 'n' Vibes and his alias is DJ Vibes. He started DJing in 2004 whilst attending Richmond College; it was just a hobby then, but over the years the demand for his services grew and he decided to do something about it. In 2005, he officially launched Voice 'n' Vibes along with a friend - DJ Voice. Since then, he's played at The Ministry of Sound, the Rainforest Café, Sound, and The O2 Centre, not to mention bars and clubs in Luton, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol. As a DJ, his travels have taken him all over the UK and he has his first international bookings confirmed post university - these include Sweden, Gambia, Ayia Napa and Miami. As well as being a highly successful DJ, Dean is also a biomedical science student and an entrepreneur, who is eager to give back to the community and develop businesses within and outside of entertainment. He is in the process of setting up VNV Sounds as a national entertainment company. He has taken part in charity events where he DJs for free and is part of the Talent & Entertainment Exposure (T&E Expo) team - a team that provides a free stage for amateur artists to perform at a central London venue. He wants to set up a DJ academy for up and coming DJs and he would like to go into schools and show young people that they can get involved in music in a positive way. Voice 'n' Vibes are punctual, they listen and they talk to their clients and their audience. Dean wants to expand the collective; 'I want to create something bigger - I want to cement our reputation.'



## Ruth Oluwayimika Awogbade

University of Durham, BA Brand Management,  
Marketing and PR, Event Organiser

Born in Nigeria, Ruth came over to the UK at just 10 months old. She is particularly interested in pursuing Brand Management, Marketing and PR because she loves the idea of taking something new and putting her stamp on it. Ruth's love for food, socialising and bringing people together have made for some very successful business initiatives. She hosts lavish dinner parties for students who pay a set price for an intimate evening of entertainment and three courses of West African food. Ruth's entrepreneurial mentality and meticulous planning have allowed these parties to be both a social and financial success. Her biggest event is 'Magnify 2009' taking place at the Mary Ward House in Bloomsbury. Inspired by the Christian events and conferences she attended with her mother, Ruth felt a calling to hold events for girls to see exactly what Christianity was all about. 'Seeing the idea for Magnify evolve was amazing. More and more people began to believe and catch the vision.' She wrote to a Christian multi-millionaire sharing her vision for the conference and was given a grant of £1000. Ruth was also interviewed on gospel radio stations such as 'Premier Radio'. She says of the experience 'It was amazing! I've been listening to the station since I was six years old.' Even the Durham student newspaper, which has had a reputation for being particularly anti-religion in the past, supported the sheer effort and quality of the event which is set to attract over 300 students. Ruth wants to change the stereotype of Christianity as 'something quite aggressive' by hosting an inclusive and fun event full of talks, seminars and relaxed time where her peers have the chance to explore what Christianity is really about.



## Simbarashe Chiguma

London School of Economics and Political Science  
Bsc Economics, Academic Excellence

Simba is a phenomenal student and sportsman. He moved to the UK from Zimbabwe at 16 and is currently studying Economics at the LSE. Simba showed early signs of academic brilliance, achieving the top score in Zimbabwe for his O-Levels (equivalent to UK's A-Levels) in 2005. He has also secured an internship for summer 2010 with a top investment bank, Goldman Sachs. This opportunity is normally given to penultimate year students but Simba was offered the internship in his first year of University. Each year the LSE awards the Delbridge Scholarship to one outstanding student from Africa or the Caribbean. This entitles the scholar to £60,000 over 2 years; the funds assist with tuition fees and living costs. Due to his academic excellence and other competencies, this scholarship was awarded to Simba in 2008. Simba's main motivation is an innate desire to achieve and improve himself in any way possible. 'Just looking at where I've come from and seeing where I want to get to gives me all the motivation I need to push myself as far and as high as I need to go' he says. At 15, Simba was approached to play for his country in Zimbabwe's national under 16 basketball team. Due to personal reasons, he turned the offer down. He now, however, plays for the LSE men's basketball team where he continues to develop and strengthen his sporting skills. Simba's ultimate goal is to return to Zimbabwe to assist in developing his country: 'I feel like I have a responsibility to build myself up so that I can one day go back home and build other people up'. He intends to begin by establishing himself as a successful investment banker.



---

## Winifred Acheampong

---

De Monfort University, BA Fashion and Design  
Fashion Designer

---

Winifred was born in Ghana and moved to the UK when she was 12. Winifred considers her mother to be her main influence in her decision to pursue fashion. Growing up, she was fascinated - 'maybe even obsessed' - by her mother's ability to customise and co-ordinate her clothing. Winifred went on to acquire A-levels in art and design before studying a foundation course in graphics and fashion design. At university, Winifred is actively involved in organising fashion shows for De Monfort's African Caribbean Society. Winifred's work was featured in GFW (Graduate Fashion Week) - an equivalent to London Fashion Week involving fashion students from across the globe. 18 students out of a shortlist of 34 were featured. 'I worked very hard to get here and this is my biggest achievement' she says. Winifred believes for many black students it's very difficult to gain access to their desired careers, especially when their choice is unconventional - like fashion. However she is confident that if you know what you want and are prepared to work for it, no-one can stop you. Winifred is proud of her resilience and determination to stick with fashion. 'I've been through a lot but persevered despite many alternative career paths being pushed in front of me. I was always asked, "Why not business, medicine or law?" But fashion and art are my life and passion.' She has many goals. In the short term, she aims to build up her CV with a number of placements with leading designers and fashion houses. Her long term ambition is to one day have her own fashion label.




---

## YolanDa Brown

---

University of Kent, PhD, Kent Business School  
Musician

---

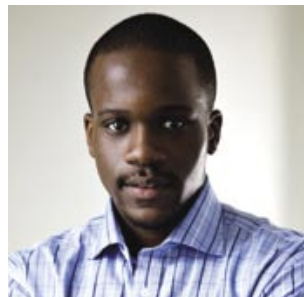
YolanDa is a British jazz saxophonist and composer. She previously fronted a TV talk show on a Sky Channel, Passion TV, and appeared in inspirational idents for the BET (Black Entertainment Television) network. A 2008 MOBO 'Best Jazz' winner and Urban Music Award nominee, YolanDa is emerging as one of the most significant tenor saxophonists in jazz and urban contemporary music today. For the past three years, she has performed with some of the music world's most respected artists, and her name on the bill alone can sell out venues. 'I think the first time I heard music I was still in the womb. My father [who worked in advertising] introduced me to all kinds of music, and so I didn't really have a choice, I suppose. I was hooked from the youngest age.' At six, she was regularly seated at the piano, going diligently through the keys until she understood the instrument intrinsically. By seven, she was giving the violin a go, then the drums. She loved the recorder, the oboe, and by 13 had settled on the saxophone. She refused to take lessons, however, simply because the saxophone to YolanDa was somehow instinctual. She simply knew how to play it, naturally, as if she were born to do so. YolanDa was as good in the classroom as she was in the music room. She became head girl during secondary school, sailed through her GCSEs, A-levels, and on into university. She completed a Masters in Management Science, as well as a Masters in Social Research Methods and has begun to study for her PhD at the University of Kent. She has played at jazz venues in Miami, Rotterdam and Spain. She has played before the High Commission and at the Ocho Rios Festival in Jamaica.



## Samuel Kasumu

University of Brunel, Bsc Business Management (Accounting), Entrepreneur **5th**

Since the age of 13 Sam has expressed an interest in the performing arts. He has appeared on popular soaps such as *The Bill* and *EastEnders* and starred in a short film called 'Welcome to Britain'. Despite his love for acting, his older sister encouraged him to go to university. In his first year he was heavily focused on journalism; he wrote numerous articles on the issues affecting African and Caribbean people. These articles were featured in his university newspaper and also appeared in the UK's number one black paper 'The Voice'. In his second year Samuel was elected President of Brunel University's African-Caribbean Society (ACS) - the largest ACS in the UK. 'It is very different from other ACSs in that it was like running a major organisation due to the size.' Sam says this experience was essential to his personal development; it enhanced his communication skills and leadership abilities. He has also been a student ambassador at Brunel. In his third year, Sam became heavily involved in student politics, becoming the first and youngest candidate to receive over 1000 votes in Brunel University's Student Union election for the post of Vice President. The only student on the university governing body (university council), Samuel was involved in the distribution of university budgets of nearly £165 million. Sam is best known for founding and running Elevation Networks (EN). EN is a student-led social enterprise that aims to bridge the gap between underrepresented groups within communities and industry. The group aims to create a belief system that provides a gateway for aspirations to become tangible goals. The underlying ideology behind Elevation Networks is the concept of networking. EN targets young people within society where the opportunity to network is not being fully utilised and appreciated.



## Olawale Gbaja-Biamila

London School of Economics and Social Science Bsc Accounting and Finance, Comedian **JOINT 4th**

Ola The Comedian - as he's known on the comedy circuit - didn't always want to be a comedian. 'I wanted to be an investment banker; I thought it was a natural progression - good school, good uni, good job.' Ola had always been interested in comedy, but it wasn't until he was asked to perform at an Aston University Society Ball that he got his first taste of comedic success. Since then he has appeared on stage with Dem Boys and at Kojo's Comedy Funhouse in 2007. In 2008 he worked on MTV Base's Jason Lewis Experience as a Script Supervisor. In January 2009, he performed at the Capitol Skyline Hotel, Washington D.C., the night before the Obama inauguration. He had been spotted at a show in London and invited to perform. 'I've had to learn everything from scratch, from getting gigs to branding and identity' he says. In August 2008, to coincide with his 21st birthday, Ola released a one man stand up special named 21. Held at the LSE, around 300 people attended and the DVD was distributed as a marketing tool. Earlier this year, [olathecomedian.com](http://olathecomedian.com) was launched with the aim of keeping people entertained between shows. When asked how he juggled comedy with his degree, Ola replied, 'getting on the train in the morning from a show and going to a lecture helps me carry on. I go from doing something I love to something I don't - comedy spurred me on.' Ola's journey has been full of ups and downs but he's keen on pursuing comedy full time after university. 'If there's one thing uni has taught me, it's that you have a choice - you have to be true to yourself. If you live for somebody else, you can never be happy.'



## Lewis Iwu

University of Oxford, BA Politics, Philosophy and Economics, Student Politician and Debater

JOINT  
4th

Lewis Iwu is the first black president of the Oxford University's Student Union. He is also the current world university debating champion. In 2004-2005 Lewis was elected as a member of the UK Youth Parliament by the young people of his constituency, Newham. In this role he liaised with MPs and represented his constituency on various advisory boards. In 2006 he was elected as President of New College JCR, Oxford, to oversee more than 450 students and a £40,000 budget. Lewis was elected president of the union just before the end of 2007 and took up his position in June 2008. About 3,500 students voted in the election and Lewis beat his nearest rival by 450 votes. During his time in office, Lewis has lobbied against rising tuition fees and worked on ensuring that student accommodation is provided by the university. Alongside reaching the highest post in student politics at the University of Oxford, Lewis won the world university debating championship. Victory was particularly sweet because the team set a world record by winning the debate with 25 points (the previous best had been 24). Away from his day job, Lewis likes to play football and coach members of Oxford's debating society. Lewis will not be seeking re-election. Having recently accepted a training contract with Slaughter and May, he will be starting law school for two years in September 2009. Lewis says that he would love to go into politics; his big passion is education and he would like to work on education policy. When speaking about all that he has overcome he says 'If you are good enough at something then nothing can stop you. There are barriers but that should not stop you from going for it.'



## Jennifer Larbie

University of Birmingham, BA Political Science and International Relations, Student Politician

3rd

Jennifer's ultimate goal is to establish a successful political career. From a young age she has been interested in bringing about positive change. Her particular focus is groups that don't have a dominant socio-political voice, 'particularly minority ethnic groups, women and the disabled.' Thus far, her political journey has been extremely impressive. At 15 years old Jennifer was elected into the UK Youth Parliament where she represented the views of the young people in her borough. Now, on her sabbatical year at the University of Birmingham, Jennifer is currently holding the post of Student Union President. She is the first black female to hold this position. 'I am extremely proud and grateful to hold this post but more proud to have been voted in by such a wide cross section of people' she says. As well as holding such a demanding post, Jennifer is a Student Officer for 'Black Boys Can' an organisation that seeks to raise the profile, skill-set and self-esteem of young black men. 'This organisation is very close to my heart. There is so much negativity in the media about black men, I think it is essential that we do the ground level work of helping them to aspire to achieve big things.' She is heavily involved in her university's African Caribbean Society and also volunteered in an Anti-BNP campaign in the run up to the European elections. Jennifer is also an Academic Mentor. Despite her many commitments, responsibilities and loaded diary, Jennifer's focus is clear, 'I really just want to be involved in helping and facilitating positive change and raising the profile and aspirations of black people.'



## Melba Mwanje

University of Oxford, Bsc Human Sciences  
 Founder of Charity, SE1 United

2nd

Melba was born in Uganda and moved to the UK with her parents when she was very young. Growing up on a council estate in South East London, Melba became increasingly frustrated by the crime rate and lack of social space to encourage young people's productivity and creativity. Driven by her aim to make the Waterloo area in London more youth friendly, a 13 year old Melba, along with friends, started an organisation called 'SE1 United.' The key objective of this initiative is to provide a safe and creative space for young people who may find themselves in trouble without any worthy alternative option. They aim to raise aspirations and promote a positive image of young people whilst giving them a presence in the community: 'We are run by young people for young people.' Melba submitted numerous bids in an attempt to raise the funds for the project. After approaching the likes of the Waterloo Community Regeneration Trust, Lottery Fund, YAP Trust and individuals such as the Earl of Somerley, Melba and her group raised a staggering £230,000. This enabled them to buy land and build what they call 'The Living Space.' Within this building, Melba and her team have held a series of dance and drama workshops (one of which was taught by Hollywood actor Kevin Spacey) and mentoring classes. The SE1 United team also raised enough capital to take a group of its young people (many of whom had never been outside of London) on trips abroad. Melba took a group of 10 young men, aged between 14 and 17, to the Auschwitz State Museum. At University, Melba has held posts as the president of the African Caribbean Society (ACS) as well as Domestic Liaison Officer for St Catherine's College.



## Tom Chigbo

St John's College, Cambridge, BA Geography  
 Student Politician

1st

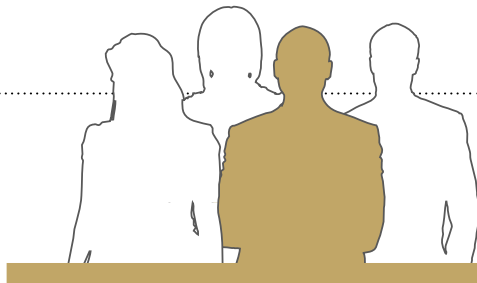
Tom Chigbo is CUSU's (Cambridge University Student Union) first black President. He didn't go to Cambridge intending to get involved with student politics. 'I saw there were certain issues and things I wanted to change about college and uni,' Tom recalls. In his first year he ran for Green Officer of St John's College JCR (Junior Common Room) and quickly started to implement changes. Tom believes in local activism and grass roots campaigning; he started paper recycling in each room of his College. He also collected all the cans and bottles from two staircases of his College to demonstrate the amount that could potentially be recycled. His College now recycles all cans and bottles. In his second year, Tom ran for (and won) the position of JCR President. In his final year, he ran for President of the University's Student Union. When asked about campaigning during finals, Tom commented, 'It's been difficult, but there's a culture here of going beyond your academics to get the best possible experience.' On the campaign trail he appeared at 16 colleges in total, with up to four speeches per night. Voter turnout increased from 16% to 21% - the highest turnout at a Russell Group university Student Union election in 2009. As CUSU's President he wants to raise the profile of several campaigns, such as the campaign for the new sports centre, higher education funding and the Cambridge Access Scheme. He is very passionate about the Cambridge Access Scheme: 'We need to look out for prospective as well as current students' he says. When not studying or campaigning, Tom plays football and lacrosse for his college and played lacrosse for the university. Post Cambridge, Tom is unsure about the future; all he knows is that he wants to help people in his day to day job.



---

## Are You Rare?

---



You've just read the profiles of the Rare Rising Stars of 2009. Perhaps you think you should have made this year's list, or you know someone who is a Rising Star and should be included next year.

If so, we want to hear from you.

Rare Recruitment places the **most talented ethnic minority students** into **great jobs with top companies**. We work with some of the best companies in the world across different sectors.

Our service is completely **free for students**. If we help get you a graduate job, you will be paid the same salary as a non Rare candidate.

**If you don't know what you want to do then we work with you to find out. If you know what you want then we'll help you to get it.** The help that we offer begins while you are at university and continues well into your career. We help with career advice, CVs, numeracy tests, presentations, interviews and assessment centres.

You can apply at any point in the year and we take on students from every year of university. To apply, visit: [www.rarerecruitment.co.uk/apply](http://www.rarerecruitment.co.uk/apply)

---

# Final Thanks

---

A huge well done to our Top 16 Rare Rising Stars. Your achievements are outstanding and deserve to be celebrated!

We'd also like to thank all those who were interviewed, including: Kwaku Awuku-Asabre (Politics), Ruel Brathwaite (Cricketer), Alfred Lewis Enoch (Actor), Beatrice Korleki (Fashion Designer), Harry Aikines-Aryeetey (Athlete) and Isaac Borquaye (MC/ Musician). We salute your efforts, achievements and willingness to be a part of this publication.

You are all stars.





020 7242 0322

[info@rarerecruitment.co.uk](mailto:info@rarerecruitment.co.uk)

[www.rarerecruitment.co.uk](http://www.rarerecruitment.co.uk)