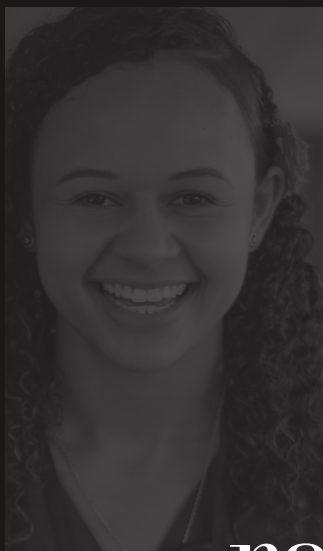
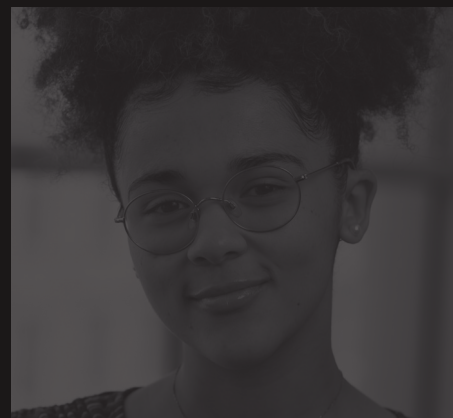
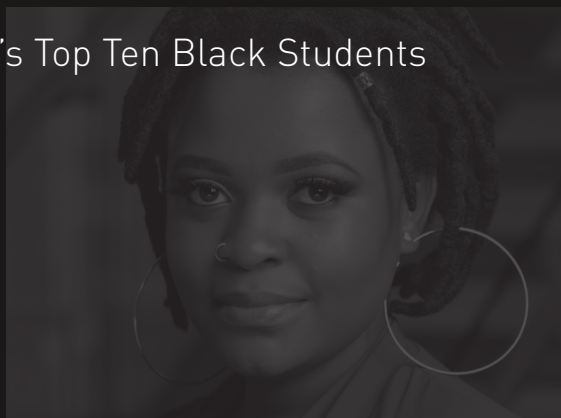


# RARE RISING STARS 2020

The UK's Top Ten Black Students



rare

In association with:



# About the Sponsors

## University of Cambridge

Founded in 1209, the mission of the University of Cambridge is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence. To date, 90 affiliates of the University have won the Nobel Prize.

The University comprises 31 autonomous Colleges, which admit undergraduates and provide small-group tuition, and 150 departments, faculties and institutions. It is a global university: its 19,000 student body includes 3,700 international students from 120 countries. Cambridge researchers collaborate with colleagues worldwide, and the University has established larger-scale partnerships in Asia, Africa and America.

The University sits at the heart of one of the world's largest technology clusters. The 'Cambridge Phenomenon' has created 1,500 hi-tech companies, 14 of them valued at over US\$1 billion and two at over US\$10 billion. Cambridge promotes the interface between academia and business, and has a global reputation for innovation.

## University of Oxford

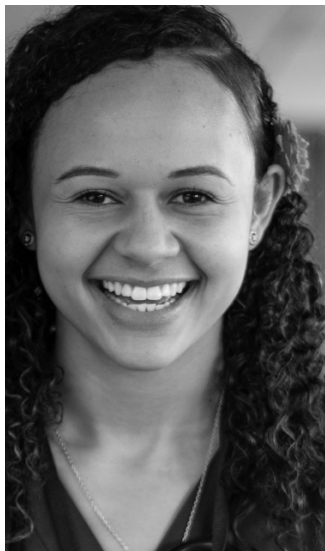
The University of Oxford is the oldest university in the English-speaking world. It is also a world-leading centre of learning, teaching, research, and innovation. Spin-out companies built upon cutting-edge University research contribute significantly to the UK's economy.

Oxford is a collegiate university made up of 39 colleges and six permanent private halls, giving students and academics the benefits of belonging both to a large, internationally renowned institution and to a small, interdisciplinary academic community.

A major priority for the University is widening access and increasing the diversity of its student body. Each year Oxford reaches out to and engages thousands of schools and hundreds of communities across the country to encourage and support applications from students from all backgrounds. Our programmes range from innovative digital platforms engaging students with 'Oxpire Big Questions' to face to face residencies for prospective undergraduates. With the announcement of the expansion of the UNIQ programme, Opportunity Oxford and Foundation Oxford, alongside changes to our financial support packages, by 2023 the University aims for one in four students admitted to be from backgrounds currently under-represented at Oxford. The University is dedicated to ensuring that any student who has the talent and commitment to succeed as a student at Oxford has the opportunity to do just that.

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# Foreword

As I write this foreword, the half-way point of 2020 is only a few days away. In the past six months, two words have woven themselves into the fabric of our daily experience - “unprecedented times.” Life has simultaneously been put on hold, and thrown into tumult and uncertainty for many. We have been forced to reassess our relationship with time; forced to foreground the immediate and reach to the past whilst a mountain of uncertainty is erected ahead of us. This aligns seamlessly with the thought I would like to underlie this publication as it enters a new decade: reflect and renew.

Initially, COVID-19 was alleged to be a great leveller. The virus was portrayed as an indiscriminately disruptive force. Yet, as its effects unravel across the world, light is being shone on all too familiar patterns of inequality in healthcare, education, and labour. Further, as the brutal murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis continues to reignite #BlackLivesMatter protests across the world, it is still more evident that the fight for racial equality has not yet been won.

Despite this year’s inescapable emphasis on the unprecedented, we have not lost sight of our own ongoing mission to champion and fight for racial equality in elite professions and universities in the UK, and across the world. This has been paramount long before inequality yet again re-entered headlines, and will remain so as ‘normality’ - whatever that is - is slowly restored.

I am honoured to have been given the task of editing this year’s Rare Rising Stars publication as we enter what could be a pivotal decade for humanity. Over the past decade, we have been privileged enough to watch our stars become best-selling authors, CEOs, Olympic medallists, award-winning podcasters and musicians, influencers, activists and more. Through sharing their stories of resilience, perseverance, and ambition, we hope to have equipped a generation of future young leaders with the belief that their background should not, and cannot, limit their aspirations.



It is entirely apt that in this year’s edition of Rare Rising Stars, we are able to celebrate individuals who, in response to witnessing the injustice suffered by people around them, and across the world, stood up and took action. At a time where the problems of inequality are being brought to the fore, it is refreshing to celebrate the successes of individuals motivated by the necessary task of levelling the playing field for future generations.

I hope through reading the stories of this year’s stars, as well as learning of the progress of some of our stars from the last decade, you are inspired with a sense of momentum, not fatigue, to push on with the fight for justice.

This publication could not have happened without the help and support of many individuals. I would like to thank Naomi Kellman for all the support she provided throughout the entire process. I would also like to thank Maxine Monu, Will Smith and Saffron Jackson for being a reliable source of guidance at times of need. Amidst all the uncertainty, our judges Kem Ihenacho, Sophie Chandauka, Tia Counts and Tom Chigbo still gave their time to help select this year’s stars; for that, I am grateful. Likewise, without the hard work of our designer, Sasha Djukicin, this publication could not have come together in the way in which it has done. I would also like to thank our sponsors, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Oxford for making these awards possible.

Finally, I would like to thank all NHS staff and front-line workers who for too long have not gotten the thanks they deserve for sustaining the foundations our country relies on.

**Bez Adeosun**  
Schools & Universities Co-Ordinator & Editor of Rare  
Rising Stars 2020



# The Stars







# Horcelie Sinda Wa Mbongo

Contemporary Art | Sotheby's Institute of Art | Charity and Social Activism

Horcelie is an activist, campaigner and artist. Horcelie moved to the UK with her parents aged 9 after being raised in Kinshasa for the early part of her life. The move was difficult for Horcelie as she only spoke French and her native tongue upon arrival in the UK. A year later, her parents' separation meant Horcelie had to move to a new primary school, an experience which further affected her ability to settle in. At the age of 11, Horcelie and her mother discovered that she was HIV positive from birth.

Horcelie had developed a passion for art at a young age, and remembers being commended for her work in primary school as the moment which fuelled her interest in the subject. Her interest developed further in Sixth Form when her art teacher was able to see potential in her work and encouraged Horcelie to apply to Central Saint Martins, a college no one in her class aspired to. With her teacher's support, she was able to put together a portfolio and was eventually offered a one-year foundation course at the prestigious college in Fine Art painting. Horcelie enjoyed her experience at the college and used it as an opportunity to develop and learn more about her work. After completing the foundation year, she then went on to Chelsea College of Arts to study her BA in Fine Art.

However, during the second year of her degree, she found herself questioning her work and the opportunities available for her within the industry. That summer, she decided to volunteer with the International Citizenship Service in South Africa, which she viewed as a life-changing experience. Over a period of three months, she

worked in schools with other volunteers, facilitating discussions around HIV/AIDS and sexual reproductive health. Returning, Horcelie was inspired to carry on her community work in the UK.

*"It's about taking courage... it's part of my life and it's time to take up the cross instead of wasting time blaming."*

Back at university, Horcelie began volunteering with an organisation called Youth Stop Aids. With the organisation, she went to events in Dundee, Leeds, Sheffield and London and shared her story whilst educating people on HIV/AIDs. During that time, she also enrolled herself in the Miss Congo UK beauty pageant, which she ended up winning. As the winner, Horcelie was able to speak at multiple charity events and do a lot of community work representing the pageant. However, Horcelie was forced to quit her role as pageant queen a few months later as she struggled to balance the commitments with studying for her finals and working two jobs.

On completing her degree, Horcelie resumed her campaigning efforts and was able to travel to America with the Student Campaign Against Aids, speaking at universities in New York, Connecticut and Boston, including a keynote speech at Harvard University. A week later, Horcelie delivered a TedxTalk at Newcastle University where she spoke about her HIV/AIDs journey, artwork, Christian faith, spirituality and black identity. Later that year, Horcelie revisited South Africa to attend an AIDS conference, which inspired her to start her own campaign in her home nation of Congo.

When Horcelie came back to the UK, she fundraised £1500 and successfully planned and ran a one-month campaign in Congo alongside another volunteer in the summer of 2019. The campaign saw her visit hospitals, schools, orphanages and conferences to lead talks and panels on the issue of HIV/AIDs and sexual reproductive health. Horcelie estimates she spoke to around 500 people in that period. After that experience, Horcelie is in the process of setting up her own organisation called Lobiko ya Congo, meaning 'a hope for Congo', and running more campaigns in the region. Currently, she is fundraising £5000 and is planning to expand her team to around 5 volunteers, to support the running of a three-week campaign in Ghana, followed by a two-month campaign in Congo.

Horcelie is planning all this whilst completing her Master's degree, which is partly funded through a £16,000 grant from the Sotheby's Institute of Art due to her impressive performance at interview. Horcelie is also hoping to produce more of her artwork, which explores her Christian faith, spirituality and black identity, within the coming months.



# Tanatsei Gambura

Intermedia Arts | University of  
Edinburgh | Art and Youth Activism

Tanatsei grew up in Harare, the capital of Zimbabwe, as the eldest of five siblings. Despite the financial challenges she faced growing up, Tanatsei's parents made sacrifices in order to pay for her education through her early years. When Tanatsei turned 14, her family encountered overwhelming challenges which meant school became unaffordable and Tanatsei was forced to spend a year out of education. This was a pivotal moment for Tanatsei, as she realised that she couldn't continue to be dependent on others for the rest of her life.

At this time, Tanatsei went into survival mode and channelled that energy into building herself a social network of like-minded people. She also started looking for ways to be more active within her community and discovered the beginning of a lifelong interest in the arts. When she returned to school aged 15, Tanatsei became heavily involved in theatre and the arts, to the extent that her work was selected by the British Council for a photography and poetry residency called *These Images are Stories*, which ran in London for 8 months. When she was 17, Tanatsei was nominated to receive a generous scholarship to study at the African Leadership Academy in Johannesburg, where she completed their two-year programme.

**"If you don't come from a background of privilege, you don't have people to fall back or rely on as nothing has been handed to them, so they have nothing to give you."**

Before moving to South Africa, Tanatsei founded the 25 May Movement, a collective of artists, community organisers, social workers and cultural producers collaborating to lead social change in Africa. Their aim is to build a vibrant, dynamic and sustainable creative sector that contributes to development in Africa. For Tanatsei, this was her attempt to create an awareness and sense of responsibility for people in her community about the future of the continent. The 25 May Movement strategy is to integrate arts and culture into a comprehensive plan designed to shift public sentiment and forge a new collective consensus around a social challenge. Its programmes offer week-long workshops, celebrations and community gatherings on socio-political themes such as colourism, African masculinity, dissecting the urgency of voice and a dialogue for peacebuilding. Tanatsei ran four such events herself in Zimbabwe last year, with over other 70 people in attendance.

In 2016, the 25 May Movement was simply a group of girls who banded together behind a camera to proclaim a pan-African stance. Today, Tanatsei has led her team in running a nationwide radio broadcasting series, facilitated conversation circles to foster



dialogue, and programmed free and accessible workshops. With a staff of five female volunteers, her collective now has an online reach of over 60,000 people and has attracted the attention of organisations such as the Goethe Institute, the Swedish Embassy and the Impact Hub exchange programme.

In 2018, Tanatsei was invited onto the board of directors of ROOTS Africa, a non-profit organisation working towards the promotion of economic and social justice among young people rural and mining communities, where she now serves as the youngest advisor. That same year, she was appointed an advisor by the Global Fund for Women to advise on key issues women and young people are facing in Zimbabwe. In December 2018, Tanatsei was selected by the United Nations Women for a Gender in a Changing Context panel where she was the youngest woman on the panel. Last year, she was the recipient of the Diana Award for humanitarian work. Tanatsei has also been a member of the student council of the World Leading Schools Association for the past two years. She was in the process of programming a workshop for their conference this year to be held in Toronto with around 300 of their members.

Tanatsei was selected as one of eight high-achieving Mastercard Foundation scholarship recipients from Zimbabwe, which enables her to read Intermedia Art at the University of Edinburgh. There, she has co-founded a project called *Ourchives* which is an interdisciplinary decolonial project based in Edinburgh that attempts to draw light on urgent debates on the provenance and afterlife of cultural objects from formerly colonised spaces in Scotland and beyond. Tanatsei was recently shortlisted for the inaugural Amsterdam Open Book Prize and has just been announced as its runner-up.



# Leanne Armitage

**Medicine | St George's University | Charity and University Access**

Leanne grew up in a single-parent home on a council estate in Peckham with her mother and four siblings. Leanne developed an interest in Medicine from a young age, intrigued by the frequent sound of the sirens of emergency services in her neighbourhood. Aged 15, Leanne unfortunately witnessed the aftermath of a stabbing in an estate nearby to where she lived. It was in that moment that Leanne was moved to make a difference, setting herself the aspiration of becoming a trauma surgeon.

However, with no medics in her family or social network, Leanne had to use her initiative to research the steps she would need to take towards achieving this goal. Throughout her GCSEs Leanne was in the second set for most of her classes. Despite not being in the greatest academic environment, she was still able to successfully attain 10 A\*s in her GCSEs. Leanne also applied for and was subsequently awarded the A Better Chance bursary from Mill Hill School, where she boarded for sixth form.

**"I used to think this is bigger than me, this is about people. I attached my vision to something greater than myself which gave me the tenacity and the resilience to be really focused."**

On first applying to medical school, Leanne was rejected after not performing well on the UKCAT, the entrance test for Medicine courses. Disheartened though she was, Leanne's rejection turned out to be a blessing in disguise. After completing her A Levels and achieving 3As, Leanne secured three medical offers during her gap year and decided to study at St George's University of London. During this year she was also awarded the Southwark Scholarship, which is now currently funding her medical degree, as a result of the volunteering and community work she did during that year.

After her second year of medical school, Leanne became very frustrated by the lack of diversity in the student body across UK medical schools. To make a change, she founded Leanne's Amazing Medics, an outreach programme designed to inspire, equip and increase the self-confidence of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. The programme started in 2017 with Leanne going back to her old sixth form and working with eight students once a month for six months, delivering practical and theoretical lessons. By the end of the year, she had secured some funding from her university and was able to expand the programme to three more schools; Leanne was now working with 30 students in Year 9 as she realised she had to start from a much younger age. She ran the programme again the following year.

In that period, Leanne also took the step to formalise the work she was doing and decided to co-found a charity, The Armitage Foundation, with Daniel Huf. The Armitage Foundation offers a medical outreach programme to students from under-represented backgrounds with the aim of increasing diversity across UK medical schools. Through this work, Leanne was awarded the UK 2018 Queen's Young Leaders Award by Her Majesty the Queen at Buckingham Palace.

In January 2019, Leanne received an £11,000 grant from Comic Relief, alongside some matched funding by a private donor, which allowed The Armitage Foundation to hire their first staff member. Since April 2019, the Strategic Programme Manager has worked on transforming their programmes to a now three-tier programme designed to support students from Year 9 up until their application to medical school – Armitage Juniors, Armitage Seniors and Armitage Scholars. As of February 2020, the charity has now rolled out all three programmes in the same three schools they have been working with in the South London area.

Leanne has also had the opportunity to deliver several keynote speeches at high profile events. She was the guest speaker for Comic Relief's Red Nose Day Reception at the Houses of Parliament, and the keynote speaker for a variety of prestigious occasions, including the Baton Awards Ceremony at the Houses of Parliament, Ernst & Young's Black-Tie Ball event, the 2018 Aleto Foundation leadership course, Sir Kenneth Olisa OBE's celebratory event in recognition of his knighthood, and many more events. Leanne hopes to carry on using her gift for public speaking and her passion to inspire people to be the best version of themselves.





# Onyinye Udokporo

Education | King's College London |

## Education and Business

Onyinye grew up in a one bedroom flat with her three younger siblings and her parents. Her mother stayed at home to look after the four children whilst her father worked as a meter reader. However, Onyinye's father fell ill for a while, so her mother began to work as a hairdresser from their home to make ends meet. This was a challenging time for Onyinye, and she slept in a cot until the age of six because her parents couldn't afford to buy her a bed. Onyinye's mother was also going to night school in order to find better paid employment, and her eldest child stepped in to take on the role of being a third parent. As much as the family's funds were low, her mother somehow managed to pay for Onyinye's extra tuition, since she was determined to ensure her daughter would get into a high-performing secondary school. Onyinye recalls how her mother would often find the brightest teenagers whose hair she would braid and ask them to tutor Onyinye.

After performing exceptionally well in an 11+ exam, Onyinye won a scholarship from the Worshipful Company of Tylers and Bricklayers. This award enabled her to board at Christ's Hospital independent school, where she thrived academically and embedded herself in the school community. As a pupil, Onyinye raised over £4,000 for the Prince's Trust, as well as leading the campaign to fundraise for a gift to the school in recognition of the opportunities they had given young people.

Onyinye went on to attend King's College London, where she read Religion, Politics and Society and was awarded the first ever Student of the Year award for her contributions to the student body. She also won the Betty Wood Prize, awarded to the best final year BA student in Religious Studies. In another first, Onyinye became the first student to sit on the King's College London Advisory Group before going on to study for her Master's in Education, Policy and Society at King's College London.

At the age of 12, Onyinye came up with a smart way to fill her long school summer holidays that would also provide a source of income – a tutoring business. Onyinye started with a few students in English, Maths and the 11+, earning money during the weekends and summer holidays. However, it was when she got to university – and was hit with the financial strain of living in London – that she decided to expand the company.

Onyinye recalls using her mother's phone to send a few WhatsApp broadcasts about the business one weekend, and the rest is history. On the weekends, she was teaching 30 to 40 students every Saturday, in groups of up to eight in her mother's living room. Many of the students Onyinye tutored would go on to pass the 11+, achieve lots of amazing bursaries and scholarships from multiple institutions and students who were failing their GCSEs and A-Levels would go on



to achieve top grades. In the summer of her second year, Onyinye studied at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Whilst abroad, she noticed the way in which Chinese tuition companies operated at such large scale online. This inspired Onyinye to grow her business into something bigger – an online tutoring platform. Upon her return, Onyinye rebranded as Enrich Learning, created her own website, began marketing via LinkedIn, and hired nine tutors to help run her platform. She ran the platform throughout her third year and continued to provide face to face tuition every Saturday.

“The money that parents paid me would go back into the business. I never paid myself. I've never done it for the money, I have always done it for the kids.”

Onyinye spent a year without taking a salary, choosing instead to reinvest the fees paid by parents into the business. Onyinye's enterprise is now growing steadily and currently makes approximately £1,600 each month from online and in person sessions.

In the UK, Enrich Learning's mission is to provide affordable tuition for students from underprivileged backgrounds, keeping costs low but paying tutors well above the London Living Wage. Onyinye is transforming the business into an information hub where parents, students and teachers have access to education resources, tools and tips. Due to re-launch in April 2020, Enrich Learning is also set to become an online group tutoring platform, allowing for up to 25 students per session, with its growing pool of tutors.

Onyinye is dyslexic and is a champion of neurodiversity, pushing for greater understanding and support for neurodiverse students and their parents. She hopes that the Enrich Learning platform will raise awareness of the challenges faced by the neurodiverse community in the UK. In 2019, she was the guest speaker at The Lord Mayor's Election ceremony where she spoke to an audience of 1,500 about the importance of education.



# Roy Sefa-Attakora

Public Policy | Oxford University | Youth Activism

Roy was born in Lambeth and raised in Lewisham with his three siblings, in a single parent household. Growing up in Lewisham, he experienced many of his friends losing their lives and going in and out of prison. Seeing people that he grew up with end up on the wrong side of the criminal justice system motivated Roy to want to make a change in society.

Alongside his A-Levels, Roy started working for Safer London in 2013 to bridge the gap between the Metropolitan Police and his local community. He worked as a Safer London Ambassador for a year, helping his local youth team reach out to young people getting themselves in trouble and act as the middleman between their peers and youth offending teams. As a result of this work, Roy was invited in-house to work more strategically with Safer London, holding regular meetings with Prince Charles on how they could improve the relationship between communities and the police.

Following this, Roy was asked to co-chair the Youth Justice Convention in 2015 where he worked with MPs within the Ministry of Justice, judges and charities discussing how to improve criminal justice policy for better outcome. Through this convention, Roy and his partners were able to bring data forward to parliament which allowed them to pass legislation that put restrictions on the controversial Section 60 order, which allows police officers to stop and search individuals. However, this law has now been changed back under the current Prime Minister's government, much to Roy and many others' disappointment.

Roy then joined the Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, reporting to the Chairman of the board and the then Secretary of State for Justice, David Gauke and after him, Robert Buckland QC. Roy led a panel to provide ideas and solutions on youth crime prevention that helped to shape both the Youth Justice Board and future government policy. Roy also worked on educational policy within the custodial estate, working with five prisons for young people, government officials and key stakeholders to introduce more mainstream education into prison. Since then, Roy has also been a part of steering group meetings with both the former Prime Minister Theresa May and the current Prime Minister Boris Johnson, advising on efficient and effective ways to reduce serious violence and re-offending rates in the UK.

These experiences led Roy to start his own mentoring programme under the banner of the Roy Sefa-Attakora Academy (RSA Academy). Roy started mentoring young people between the formative ages of 14 – 16. He would support them with academia whilst also bringing them to shadow him when he could at the Ministry of Justice or Nomura International. He has self-funded the mentoring of six different students and is currently mentoring three more. Roy is also the youngest Governor of Addey and Stanhope Secondary School, his old secondary school, where he helps to oversee the financial and educational performance of the school.

“I understand the importance of allowing children, regardless of their circumstances, to dream and aspire to greater things.”

Alongside all this, Roy was able to graduate with a 1st Class degree from the University of Loughborough. Last year, he was awarded the 2019 Duke of Cambridge Scholarship given to one student per year and is now undertaking his Master's in Public Policy at the University of Oxford.



# Ruth Nyakerario

**African Studies | Oxford University | Charity and Social Entrepreneurship**

Ruth grew up in the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya, in a town called Embakasi, with her parents and three siblings. During that period, her father was unable to find stable work; Ruth recalls relocating several times as a child, shifting schools each time. She estimates she attended more than five primary schools, travelling at least an hour and a half each way, before secondary school. Aged 8, she would have to travel for over three hours each way to get to her school.

As her mother was a primary school teacher, the value of education was never lost upon Ruth. Her mother would borrow books from her students to bring to Ruth to read overnight so her mother could return it the next morning. This experience developed Ruth's interest in education and allowed her to perform well in her primary school exams, which in turn enabled her to attend a state-funded boarding school for secondary school. After high school, Ruth was one of two students to receive a scholarship to attend one of the oldest private universities in Kenya, the United States International University.

At university, Ruth studied International Relations, which opened her eyes to a lot of the issues caused by socio-economic divide that affect people across the African continent. She remembers sitting in class and thinking that what she heard on the impact of social and economic inequity could not simply remain theory, becoming angry and frustrated but unsure how or what to do to improve the status quo. After reconnecting with some friends from high school, Ruth and her friend, Viney Gisore, decided to co-found their foundation, Out of the Streets.

Out of the Streets is committed to ensuring that homeless children in Kenya get an education, food, empowerment, clothing, and, if possible, can be re-united with their families. The programme started in February 2015 with feeding programmes, with Viney and Ruth cooking self-funded hot meals and sharing lunch and a few hours with the children every week. After a short while, word spread, and they would have 150 - 200 homeless children coming for meals each time. By 2016, the foundation had expanded with more volunteers and started running medical camps, serving more than 1000 people, mostly children, but also members of the wider community in slum areas in Nairobi. Drawn from her interests both in education and community work, Ruth spearheaded talent events at rehabilitation centres for street children and established libraries.

**“The whole time I thought of a growing group of young people that’ll forever be marginalized in my society....”**

The foundation also established a centre in a very deprived area called Majengo, and would run weekend education sessions for 50



to 60 children, most of whom were not in school during the week. They also had arts sessions and spiritual sessions, which enabled most of the kids to open up and share their aspirations for the future, and this became a turning point for some.

Ruth recalls it being challenging leading a community-based organisation that focused on an overlooked issue, and in some cases, helping the children was actively discouraged by the local government. There was even one incident where a police officer came over to stop one of their feeding programmes, told them what they were doing was illegal, and went on to arrest some of the kids who were there. This was because many of the children they helped were also addicted to sniffing glue, which had a detrimental effect on their health and wellbeing. Alongside their other initiatives, the foundation would identify the children they thought were recovering and help to fund their way through rehab. This was not successful for all the children they supported, and while Ruth struggled emotionally with cases of children who failed to escape their addiction and returned to the streets, she didn't let that change her zeal for the project.

Whilst at university, Ruth developed an interest in youth and migration, following her experience working with the homeless children. She was interested in why they would move from different towns and how young people got displaced by conflict. After university, she worked as a research assistant which offered her great mentorship within academia. Following that, she applied for and was successful in receiving a Rhodes scholarship, which is funding her education at Oxford. In her first year, Ruth read Refugee and Forced Migration Studies and is now undertaking a further Master's in African Studies. Ruth still intends to go back to the community work; the frustration she experienced made her realise that sometimes, we need to generate knowledge and see the bigger picture before we can affect meaningful change.

Ruth's Out of The Streets team is working towards establishing their own rehab centre and is currently fundraising, hoping to incorporate the lessons they have learnt thus far into their strategy. They also intend to work in conjunction with other similar community-based organisations that reach out to children in other locales.





## Vanessa Madu

**Mathematics | Imperial College London |  
Academics and University Access**

Vanessa was born in Ilford, East London. As the eldest of four, she believes she was naturally very motivated and driven to do well in her academics. Vanessa realised she had a knack for Maths aged 13 at a funfair in Ilford when she guessed the number of marbles in a jar (432) after doing a rough calculation of the volume of the jar. During her GCSEs, her mother suffered with a serious illness which left her hospitalised for periods while Vanessa was preparing for her exams. Despite this, Vanessa was still able to achieve 10 A\*s and an A in her GCSEs, the best grades in her year and the best grades her school had seen for a while.

Vanessa had hoped to move to a better sixth form for her A Levels but decided not to do so due to personal circumstances at home. Knowing she wanted to pursue STEM subjects later on in life, Vanessa asked her school to allow her to take four A Level subjects so she would be able to study Further Maths. Whilst they agreed, the school was only able to provide her with one external Further Maths lesson per fortnight in Year 12. This meant Vanessa had to teach herself most of the AS modules and all of A2 in Year 13, Vanessa still achieved 4 A\*s in all her A Level subjects – her grades accounted for half of the A\* grades achieved by her whole year group.

Vanessa realised that there were probably other students in her school who were very mathematically capable and would benefit from studying Further Maths, but lacked the access to higher level teaching. In Year 13, Vanessa began teaching GCSE Further Maths herself to a group of ten Year 10 and 11 students during her lunch times. This allowed her to give those students a foundation into the subject and provide them with an entry point for A Levels. After leaving the school, the GCSE Further Maths lessons are now being continued officially by her school as they could see it was a valuable resource for their students.

Vanessa had received an offer to study Maths at Trinity College, Cambridge. Unfortunately, despite meeting her A Level offer, Vanessa was unable to meet her STEP offer due to a lack of support from her school with the challenging STEP exams. Vanessa is now studying Maths at Imperial College London, where she is the only female student of black heritage in her year group.

In her first year of university, Vanessa made significant contributions to the planning and running of the London Girls' Maths event, an outreach event held by Imperial's Maths Department to reach girls who come from backgrounds underrepresented on the Maths undergraduate course. Vanessa also spoke on various panel events to inspire other young women wanting to study STEM subjects, including the Stemettes Futures Summit, and What Career Live? She also appeared on panels at



The Future of Women in STEM conference hosted by Government Events, speaking on how to inspire more girls to do STEM subjects by changing the way we teach. In July last year, Vanessa started writing her technology blog, Vanessa Speaks.

In 2020, Vanessa founded ProjectInsight, a website designed to demystify STEM careers for the benefit of young people, particularly young women. She aims to provide Day in the Life videos, interviews and information into as many STEM careers as possible to make it more accessible to young people, and to remove the fear of the unknown that can surround going into STEM careers. To date, the project has been self-funded.

Vanessa has also arranged a Junior Hackathon at Imperial College London for girls aged 6 – 10. The event, funded by her university, was due to be held in July this year with 200 to 250 girls scheduled to attend. Vanessa was planning all the activities and events for the hackathon herself, before the pandemic made going ahead impossible. Vanessa has recently been invited to do a talk at TEDxImperial College where she will be speaking about how 'the future of STEM is in our four-year olds'.

**"I recently discovered a love for technology and have been actively working to ensure that fewer women miss out on discovering a love for technology like I almost did."**

Vanessa will be one of the first undergraduate students to be featured as a part of Imperial People, a campaign designed to recognise the highest achieving students at Imperial College, where she will be featured alongside world class researchers. She has also been shortlisted for the Booking.com Technology Playmaker Awards under the 'Rising Technologist' category, selected from hundreds of entries worldwide.

## Cianne Jones

Human Rights Law | University College London | Social Entrepreneurship

Growing up as a working-class girl from a single parent household in East London, Cianne has overcome a number of barriers to get to where she is now. For her, it was the cherished relationship with her grandmother, who pressed upon her the importance of getting an education, that helped to set her on the right path. Volunteering also formed a big part of Cianne's childhood, with her mother introducing her and her brother to volunteering at a very young age.

Cianne's volunteer work started through her mother, who was the director of a domestic violence charity in Newham where Cianne gave her time throughout school and university. She went on to read Law at Brunel University between 2004 and 2007, where she wrote a first-class dissertation on domestic violence and provocation. After graduation, Cianne had to put her legal education on hold due to the unfortunate passing of her brother. She stayed at home for two years, working for Hackney Council whilst still volunteering in the charities sector, before completing her LPC in 2010.

In 2011, Cianne applied to the Vodafone World of Difference Programme and was picked as one of 500 UK winners. The programme gives the winners the chance to work for a UK-based charity of their choice and get paid for their time. Cianne chose to work full-time for a year with Newham Action Against Domestic Violence.

Following her work with women's charities, Cianne was able to secure a training contract with TV Edwards as a Family Law trainee, qualifying as a family solicitor in 2013. However, Cianne quickly realised that her heart lay in the charity sector and decided to use her new skills in advocacy in a women's rights organisation.

In 2014, Cianne became a Team Leader with Restless Development, a British Youth development organisation. The role took her to Uganda where she was able to lead a team of 18 – 25-year olds on a sexual reproductive health and rights project in rural Uganda. After six months of witnessing the lack of access to information and services for rural women and girls, Cianne decided to set-up her own NGO, Women in Leadership (WIL Uganda).

WIL Uganda operates with a mission to empower women and girls with the knowledge and skills to become leaders in their own communities. In 2014, Cianne created five rights-based in-school projects and three community-based projects, which have since been consolidated into three projects: Reproductive Health, Education and Livelihoods. When Cianne started her NGO, she had no job and no formal income, returning to the UK to sell her car and any other assets to raise funds for the organisation. She





also held fundraising events and began working for some UK-based charities so she could send half of the income to Uganda to run the project. Cianne ran WIL Uganda from 2017 – 2019 unpaid in order to fundraise effectively and to ensure that her volunteers and staff were all able to earn an income.

Since then, WIL Uganda has gone on to raise funds from Lush UK, The Pollination Project in the US and to form partnerships with several advocacy partners. They have gone from receiving small grants of £5,000 to receiving \$99,000 this year from Grand Challenges Canada for their new, year-long Reproductive Health project. Cianne's team has grown from two to seven paid staff, three volunteers and a village-based office, running a series of programmes across literacy, education and now sexual health.

Reproductive Health, funded by Grand Challenges Canada, delivers a reproductive health and rights outreach programme called *My body, My rights*. It trains local community health workers to deliver workshops to empower women and girls in remote areas. The Education project is an adult legacy programme which provides free weekly literacy and numeracy workshops for women living in remote areas, reaching 200 women so far. The Livelihood project, Ba Nyabo, works as a social enterprise that teaches women to make crafts items for sale. Ba Nyabo works with Artisans Thrive, a Colorado-based Fairtrade organisation, which buys jewellery and crafts from the women three times a year to help to provide them with an income. So far, the enterprise has supported 60 women in earning an additional income since its inception and Ba Nyabo has been featured on platforms like the Huffington Post.

“The women in my family have dedicated their careers to helping others. My grandmother worked in the NHS for over 40 years and my mother directed a women’s charity. They instilled in me a sense of community service and this has guided my professional life and my passion for helping and supporting women globally.”

WIL Uganda’s projects have reached over 2,500 women and girls in rural villages in eastern Uganda, delivered over 1,200 workshops and supported rural women in assuming positions of leadership in their own communities. The new Reproductive Health project hopes to reach 1,500 women and girls, and is set to finish in September this year. WIL have also recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bugweri District in Uganda with a plan to scale up the project across the district, reaching thousands more of rural women and girls.

Cianne is now juggling a full time LLM Law course at UCL, whilst working remotely two days per week and most weekends to support her charity in executing its upcoming projects. Before that, she worked full time as the Ugandan Country Director of Lively Minds, an award-winning early childhood development charity, consulting the Ugandan Government on early childhood development policy.



## Dr Toluwalase Awoyemi

Women and Reproductive Health | Oxford University | Charity, Health and Medicine

Toluwalase grew up in a rural town in Oshun State near Lagos, Nigeria. He grew up in a traditional Nigerian family setting, living with 20 to 25 members of his extended family at any given time, in one compound. Although his parents prioritised education, Toluwalase found he struggled with finding his footing. Subsistence farming was a part in his life growing up, and Agricultural Science and Biology became Toluwalase's favourite subjects in school. From secondary school onwards, a combination of inspirational individual teachers and a change in his own attitude, saw Toluwalase's performance in school improve significantly.

Toluwalase completed his secondary school final exam with one of the top three grades in his school. As a result, he gained admission into the University of Ibadan medical school, the best medical school in West Africa. Toluwalase excelled at medical school, coming third out of 150 in his first professional exam, then first out of 150 in his second, third and fourth. In total, Toluwalase finished his medical school with 20 academic awards: only three other people in the university's history accumulated so many.

During his studies, Toluwalase volunteered for CHECK Medical Missions, a charity which then became an NGO during his time there. Toluwalase coordinated the academic arm of the charity, which involved running tutorials and mock exams for students. As a result of that experience and his high performance, Toluwalase began officially teaching as part of the medical school's department in his 4th year of medical school. He would teach four to five hours a week and take classes of 150 – 180 people. Toluwalase then became Academic Director of the NGO and oversaw the tutoring of between 150 – 200 students over a two-year period.

CHECK Medical Mission also had an outreach arm, and Toluwalase soon became its Planning Director. He organised 22 outreach events to areas without access to doctors to drop off supplies, counsel people and offer basic treatment. When the NGO grew, Toluwalase became Logistics Director and created a conference for 200 young undergraduates in the region, which involved seminars on leadership, employment and medical school.

"In life I have learnt that you don't lose your light by lighting the candles of others, instead your path becomes brighter."





After his undergraduate degree, whilst completing the mandatory National Youth Service Corps, Toluwalase instituted and promoted the practice of holistic medicine, exercise and adequate nutrition to all patients seen at the Federal Medical Centre in Ido-Ekiti. There, he helped plan and participated in two medical outreach programmes to two rural communities in Ido-Ekiti where the team diagnosed, treated and educated close to 300 patients.

Recently, Toluwalase co-founded his own NGO, *The Ganglion Initiative*, an education social enterprise which aims to correct the shortage of careers counsellors and university admission services among public secondary schools in Nigeria compared to their private counterparts. The NGO was launched with a career and university admission workshop at two Advanced level schools in Ibadan for approximately 200 students, increasing to eight schools in the organisation's second year. The NGO won, along with two others, the title of Start-ups to Watch Out For at the Oxford Africa conference in 2018. The project is largely self-funded, but Toluwalase has been able to raise £1,000 in donations.

In 2017, Toluwalase was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship to begin his PhD in Women and Reproductive Health at the University of Oxford. His PhD research aims to understand why some babies are born prematurely and why a significant number of women develop hypertension while pregnant. He was one of the first students to successfully transfer from a probationary research status in his department and is currently responsible for the academic and professional development of four PhD students in his department. Dr Awoyemi is also involved in the access and outreach programme at his college, Christ Church, and works to increase the representation of ethnic minority students at Oxford.



## Diana Wangari

**MBA | Said Business School, Oxford University | Healthcare and Business**

Diana was born in Nairobi, Kenya and lived with her mother, a public servant and her father, a military pilot. Unfortunately, Diana's parents separated when she was 12, leading to Diana, her mother and sister moving in with her grandmother. During that separation, Diana had to figure out how to help pay her school fees through doing odd jobs. Eventually, despite still being a teenager, Diana was able to find a job at the local newspaper as an opinion writer. Throughout her high school years, Diana wrote a weekly column for her local newspaper documenting her life as a student. When Diana got a place at medical school, she transitioned her column into a medical student diary and moved over to *The Standard Kenya*, the second largest paper in Kenya at that time. These experiences shaped Diana's beginnings in journalism and sparked her interest in public health communication.



Whilst studying Medicine, Diana realised that it was extremely difficult to work within the Kenyan healthcare system due to the enormous systemic issues it faced. As a journalist, Diana decided to start writing more on public health and started to look for more opportunities to learn more about the discipline. She came across the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp, Belgium and after speaking to her editors and supervisors, they were able to create a journalist-in-residency programme for her which allowed her to go to Belgium and examine how to communicate public health challenges in the Global South more effectively.

This period coincided with the Ebola outbreak of 2014. As a result, Diana had the opportunity to work on the ground in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Alongside a team of people from the Institute of Tropical Medicine, Diana was able to develop a media communication tool for the Ebola outbreak that went on to be used by the World Federation of Science Journalists. This tool was also used to train a majority of science journalists in West Africa on how to adequately report on the outbreak. Diana eventually returned to Kenya to finish her medical degree. After graduating from medical school, she spent three months with the Reuters Foundation in London before moving back to Kenya and working remotely to figure out her next steps.

Diana knew she wanted to remain within the healthcare ecosystem, but also knew she did not want to practice medicine in the traditional sense. It was then that Diana met her co-founder, an African American doctor and former toxicologist. Together, they decided to form a for-profit social enterprise with the premise of removing the access barriers within healthcare for patients with chronic conditions, such as patients that visit hospital frequently to collect the same medication each time.

In 2016, Diana and her co-founder created iSikCure, an app that allowed patients to remotely order medication rather than having to queue up in hospital for it. The duo pitched their start-up idea at a competition run by Boehringer Ingelheim and received \$250,000 in seed funding. With that investment, they were able to launch the platform in the capital of Kenya.

Despite 18,000 app downloads within the first 6 months, iSikCure still came across a few teething issues in its infancy stage. Firstly, although the mobile penetration of Kenya is around 96%, only 50% of the population own decent smartphones. The team found that people would often download iSikCure, then delete it a few months later after using it only once. After some market research, Diana and her co-founder decided to iterate their product. They set-up local specialised medical clinics to allow patients to initiate their





first point of contact in-person. From there, they would meet with the patients, provide a baseline evaluation and deliver subsequent follow-up remotely via the app.

In 2018, iSikCure then became CheckUps Medical Centre and launched with eight small clinics in Kenya. However, demand was so high that the start-up moved to consolidate the small clinics into three major clinics in Nairobi and opened eight smaller pick-up points around the country. More fundraising efforts from Diana resulted in a \$1 million grant from the Asia Africa fund which allowed the start-up to scale further in Kenya. The team also brought on a partner who was able to invest \$5 million which paid for CheckUps Medical Centre's expansion to South Sudan and eventually Uganda. Diana's start-up is currently in the process of building 10 large clinics in South Sudan and a further two in Uganda.

CheckUps Medical Centre has been recognised at the United Nations Development Programme Social Good Summit in Geneva, at VivaTech in Paris, and has won awards from Get in the Ring (2018) and GlaxoSmithKline (2018). Diana served as CEO of the company and was nominated for the *Top 40 Under 40 Women* in Kenya, *Management Today 35 Women Under 35* and the *Forbes 30 Under 30 in Africa* 2019. Diana is currently undertaking an MBA at Oxford University through the Skoll Scholarship for social entrepreneurs, which takes only one student from each continent per year.

**"I have come to use this slogan to define my purpose The Mission is simple: More Female CEOs."**

In April this year, Diana exited CheckUps Medical Centre and, recognising the gaping capital need for more female-led companies and the need to get more women in executive positions, Diana set up Lens Africa Fund. Through investing in gender-diverse companies, investing in women-owned or led enterprises, and investing in companies whose products or services helps advance gender equality, Lens Africa Fund is aiming to redefine the narrative around women and health in East Africa.

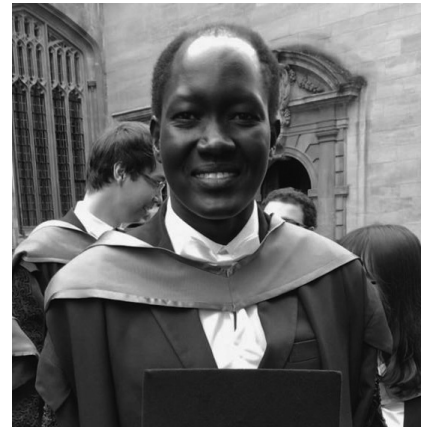
However, as the COVID-19 pandemic raged on, Diana became aware of the challenges some of her patients with chronic diseases in Kenya were facing. Therefore, alongside other Oxford MBAs, she has co-founded, MedBoda, a community medicine distribution platform for patients with non-communicable diseases that seeks to reinforce patient support groups' negotiating power for medical supplies. Diana is unable to disclose the amount she has raised but has secured a joint venture with a global logistics company.



# Contributions



# Catching Up with Chuor de Garang Alier



In this dramatic year 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic, the world came to a grinding halt. I take this moment to empathise with all those affected and especially the brave men and women in the medical and allied professions who have had to make the ultimate sacrifice in their line of duty serving humanity. Despite these challenges, it is worth remembering that there are things we should always be grateful for; the Rare Rising Star Award is truly a memorable one.

The Rare Rising Star Award gave me the platform to speak about some of the most pressing issues in reproductive health, especially infertility and its stigmatisation. This has led me to have a much more deeper appreciation of the level of public engagement that is needed to raise awareness on an issue that is less talked about. The public feedback and the number of people who have expressed how they suffer in dignified silence has renewed my resolve to seek solutions that do bring hope.

I graduated from the University of Oxford last November with an MSc in Clinical Embryology. I am grateful to the Chevening Scholarship Secretariat for having offered me the scholarship to pursue my course. After leaving Oxford, I got a scholarship to pursue a PhD in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Cape Town (UCT), supervised by Prof. Salome Maswime, the Head of Global Surgery. I will be focusing on access to fertility services in low resource settings. The South Africa Medical Research Council is funding me through a student research fellowship administered by the Department of Global Surgery.

In my country, South Sudan, I am a visiting lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, at the College of Medicine, University of Juba. Merck Foundation has also granted me an opportunity to do a three month placement as a trainee embryologist in a busy Assisted Conception Unit at Manipal University Teaching Hospital, though this has to wait, like all our pre-pandemic plans. In a nutshell, I am delightfully caught up in the mixture of teaching, research, and clinical services as a full time gynaecologist and obstetrician, and now also as an embryologist spanning Tanzania, South Sudan and South Africa.

I would like to acknowledge the floodgate of opportunities that have come my way after the Rare Rising Star Award. It is humbling to note that while sharing my story to motivate others, the tables turned on me in a good way and more opportunities knocked on my door, literally. Many young people reached out to me and I have mentored a few of them towards being awarded the Chevening Scholarship, one achieved admission to Oxford as a graduate, and another reached the penultimate stage of the Rhodes Scholarship, making the final top 6 out of 3000 applicants for Rhodes East Africa. All these success stories are just a snapshot of our African continent, so full of potential and promising young people. I am however reminded that while young people work hard to be at such places, the fact that one of my mentees had to drop out and not take up their Oxford admission showed me the limitations that stand in the way of their dreams. This was a painful reminder of my past and why I should continue to help mentor those in need of guidance where such is lacking.



I truly pay tribute to Rare Recruitment and the judges who take such care in identifying the best of so many highly talented people. One of the former recipients of the Rare Rising Stars Award (2018), Gladys Ngetich recommended me; she has equally moved on and is now a post-doctoral researcher at MIT in the USA, after successfully completing her Oxford DPhil in Aeronautical Engineering. This clearly implies that the ideals of Rare Recruitment and Target Oxbridge in picking and nurturing talent go a long way in ensuring that there is proper representation, because proper representation matters!

I had hoped that by the time of the award ceremony for the Rare Rising Stars Class of 2020 the travel advisory would have been revised and I could have attended to cheer them on during the absolutely nerve-wracking countdown of the 10 amazing personalities. To whoever gets called out first and last and all those whose names will be read out in-between, I wish you the very best of luck and I congratulate you for the well-deserved recognition.

While publicity is a great thing, kindly find the sanity and absolute peace of mind to sit down and write out that last chapter of your dissertation. For any of my Oxford colleagues who may have made it, kindly avoid the 5 minute sprint down the High Street to the Exam Schools because you had been late to make your submission while answering media queries about your award by Rare!

Many greetings from the cradle of mankind - Mother Africa!

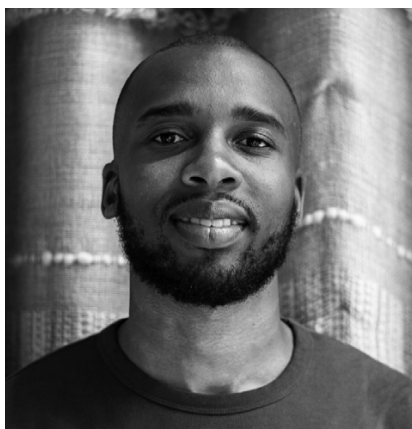
**Dr. Chuor de Garang Alier**, MD,MMed,MSc(Oxon)  
MRC South Africa Research Student Fellow,  
Department of Global Surgery,  
University of Cape Town, South Africa



# Reflect and renew

## our highlights from the past decade

Over the last eleven years, Rare Rising Stars has told the stories of over one hundred high-achieving, resilient and ambitious Black students in the United Kingdom. As we earmark the start of this new decade, and in line with the theme of this year's edition, we took the opportunity to catch-up with some of our stars from previous years and celebrate some more of their continued achievements in the last decade. Here are some exciting updates on what some of our past stars have been up to.



Peckham-born Kenny Imafidon was a Rare Rising Stars Award winner in 2014. Only four years prior, Kenny had been forced to take his A Levels in Feltham Young Offenders Institution, being the first inmate to do so, after being falsely accused of a crime he did not commit. This was one of many hurdles that the social entrepreneur and political activist had to overcome, to emerge as a true leader of his generation. By 2014, Kenny was an award-winning author of two prominent reports on youth and social policy, a trustee and director of the British Youth Council and a partner of a social policy consultancy firm. Six years later, Kenny is now the Co-Founder and Managing Director of ClearView Research LTD. His company, which just recently celebrated its fifth anniversary, is a leading-edge research and strategy agency that has worked with organisations such as Starbucks, UNICEF UK and the NHS. Alongside this, Kenny and his mentor Lord Michael Hastings co-founded *My Brother's Keeper*, which is a prison programme which has provided UK prisoners with opportunities for personal development and access to a lifelong mentor. He also sits on several boards such as BBC Children in Need, Spark Inside, S.W.I.M and City Gateway, where he is currently the Chair of the Trustee Board.



Dr Chibundu Onuzo was placed #1 in Rare Rising Stars in 2012, having already accomplished an amazing treble of accolades at that time. Aged 19, she was the youngest female writer to be published by Faber & Faber. Her book, *The Spider King's Daughter*, had been longlisted for the Desmond Elliot Prize and she had been profiled by the likes of *The Observer*, *CNN*, *BBC* and *The FT*. Since then, *The Spider King's Daughter* has won the Betty Trask Award and was shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize as well as the Commonwealth Book Prize. Dr Chibundu also went on to publish another book, *Welcome to Lagos*, before completing her PhD at King's College in 2018.

Her second book, *Welcome to Lagos*, was also a critical and commercial success. It was shortlisted for the Encore Awards and led to an 8-city book tour in America for Dr Chibundu. In 2018, Dr Chibundu was elected as a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, becoming one of the youngest fellows elected to the 200-year-old society. The following year, Dr Chibundu was commissioned for an autobiographical show held at the Southbank Centre. The show, titled *1991*, sold-out its first leg and sold well on its second leg. Dr Chibundu is now writing full-time and her third novel, *SANKOFA* will be published in the UK (Virago), US (Catapult) and Nigeria (Narrative Landscape) in 2021.



Beni Ngwamah was a recipient of a Rare Rising Stars Award in 2015. By then, he had already defied multiple odds - escaping the second Congo war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, followed by deprivation and exposure to gang violence in London - to found the Congolese Financial Project (COFIPRO), a credit union designed to unite the Congolese community and give its members access to low interest loans. Five years on, the ideas behind the project have been seeded into WEKA, a startup at which he is the CEO and Founder. WEKA is an investment marketplace that allows individuals to invest in emerging startups and businesses in Africa. The venture is supported by Google for startups, the University of Cambridge Judge Business Social Ventures Program and Clifford Chance amongst many others. Before founding WEKA, Beni worked full-time as an Analyst at Barclays Investment Bank for 2 years.



Edwin Broni-Mensah, recipient of a Rare Rising Stars Award in 2011, founded GiveMeTap in 2009 with less than £3,000 in seed funding. GiveMeTap is a social enterprise which aims to make clean drinking water available to everyone, everywhere. In 2011, GiveMeTap was operating in five UK cities. In the proceeding ten-year period, the company has experienced tremendous growth and change. In 2014, Edwin took GiveMeTap to San Francisco, employed five people and grew his company into a global enterprise selling in over 20 countries. GiveMeTap has donated over £300,000 to the funding of water pumps across the world, provided over 78,201 people access to clean water for life, and has indirectly reduced global consumption of plastic bottles by an estimated 750 million plastic bottles. In 2017, Edwin decided to transform GiveMeTap into a remote company and begun travelling around the world whilst running the organisation. Over the last 18 months, Edwin has travelled through 15 countries picking up Spanish and Salsa in Latin America along the way.



George Mpanga was a recipient of the Rare Rising Stars Award in 2012. In 2012, the straight A's - A\*s Cambridge undergraduate, was dazzling small music venues across the country with his music and poetry. Almost a decade later, George's rise to success has seen exponential growth. In 2014, George released his debut EP *The Chicken and the Egg*, to critical acclaim, with Island Records. That EP led to multiple award nominations. However, despite building the foundations of what looked like a very promising music career, George decided to take a break from music to focus on community development, and success followed him.

In 2018, George released the first chapter of his podcast series *Have You Heard George's Podcast?* independently. For George, the podcast format gave him the freedom to express his creativity beyond the boundaries of the 3-minute limit we find in the music industry today. After its first year, the podcast won in five categories at the British Podcast Awards, including Smartest Podcast and Best Arts and Culture. His second chapter, released last year, won the NME Best Podcast Award and was the first ever podcast outside of the US to win the Peabody Award for radio and podcasting. George has also been elected to be the youngest ever member of the National Council of Arts for Arts Council England, and has continued to use his platform to comment on the Black British experience with TV appearances on *Newsnight*, *Question Time* and the BBC coverage of the royal wedding between Prince Harry and Megan Markle.

**Written by Bez Adeosun**

# “We stand on the shoulders of giants”

If you had asked me a month ago if I expected a statue of a slave trader to fall head-first into the Floating Harbour in Bristol, I would have said, “Aren’t we all supposed to be in lockdown?”

The lockdown has forced society to reflect on the nature and impact of inequality. Who was going to work on packed buses while we were cocooned at home, sat over our laptops? Who was eligible for government support to help pay the rent and feed their families, and who was left to fend for themselves? Who was more susceptible to losing their lives before their time, either by a novel virus, or at the hands of the people employed to protect them?

Anyone who believes in a fairer society can no longer deny that things must change. But what form will that change take? It is wonderful that the removal of statues led to a six-fold increase in the number of Google searches for the phrase “slave trade” within the space of a week. But what about the future? Will we want to say to our sons and daughters that the only things we got were a few empty plinths, while the foundations of inequality, and its structures, were left untouched?

The task before all of us is daunting. But take solace in this: we all stand on the shoulders of giants. The tolerance of overt racial discrimination in the workplace was made that bit harder thanks to Paul Stephenson, who told Bristolians to stay off the buses in protest, helping to force the bus company to employ Black and Asian drivers and conductors. It was his action that also contributed to the passing of the first Race Relations Act in 1965, which made it illegal to deny someone a job on the basis of skin colour. With his refusal to accept blatant discrimination, we are now able to question the covert, subtler discrimination that pervades parts of public life. To Paul Stephenson, we, with the city of Bristol, give thanks.

Indeed, all of us should never forget to say ‘thank you’ for any leg-up we are given. In the spirit of reflection and renewal, I am confident that our past Rising Stars have provided countless other talented young people with help on their journey, or have directed

them to someone who can. Sometimes, you do not even know that you have inspired someone to take that leap, and turn a passion project into a business, or bring about change based on a strongly held cause of belief. Indeed, it is sometimes only at the moment when someone thanks you, that we gain a sense of our own impact on others.

Making that impact is key to everyone’s ethos and role at Rare. However, I might be so bold to say that my role in Target Oxbridge, talking to people as young as 16 years old, exemplifies my point best. I have attended 6 residential trips to Oxford and Cambridge so far. The best thing about them is not the freshly cut grass in the college quads, eating in the different halls, or walking past old haunts without worrying about an essay due the next day. Instead, it is seeing the Target Oxbridge students speak to former students on the programme, who are now helping out as undergraduates on those trips, and giving back. It is seeing the moment the students realise that, if people who look like them, interested in the same things as them, made it to Oxford and Cambridge, they can do it too.

The best among us thrive in adversity. The economic and social contributions of Black people in the United States and Europe, and of the entire African continent, are testament to this. At this moment, no one has the slightest clue of how the rest of the decade is going to turn out. However, I am certain that for the one hundred Rare Rising Stars of past and present, this is just a blank canvas waiting for their indelible mark. For them, the current economic, social and ecological climate will be a time for them to grab those new opportunities for change and innovation with both hands.

Follow the examples of your forebears; seize the day.

## Written by Alexander Olive

*Alexander Olive is a Schools and Universities Associate at Rare. He joined Rare in February 2018, and is one of the coordinators of Target Oxbridge*



# Moving from resistance, to action

*Rare Rising Stars is our way of showcasing the talents of young Black people and giving them a platform to share their work. This year we have invited Timi Sotire, a Target Oxbridge alumna and recent Cambridge graduate, to share her personal response to the events of 2020.*

When this lockdown started, we envisioned a worldwide downturn, expecting everything to be put on pause, whilst we sit and wait, hoping for the global health to recover. Yet, unbeknownst to us all, the complete opposite has happened. This pandemic has both exposed and exacerbated existing inequalities that are rampant within our society. Reports have been made regarding the disproportionate Covid-19-related death rates amongst black people in the UK, another wave of Black Lives Matter protests have been kick-started around the world, and despite our reliance on essential workers in this period, the government is still choosing to go ahead with their immigration plans.

What all these trends have in common is that they reveal how, as members of the public, we are made aware of inequalities through a specific lens, a lens that is controlled by those who want us to view this subjugation as a natural part of life. This results in people failing to imagine a world outside of these oppressive ideologies, creating space for these ideologies to proliferate and reproduce. Despite statistics saying otherwise, the media tells us that we need the police and prisons for law and order, health experts explain the black Covid-19 death rates with essentialist racial logic to have us believe that race is rooted in biology, and discussions surrounding Brexit and immigration serve to establish racism towards immigrants as culturally acceptable. These are just a few cases of how the information we consume is rooted in power structures designed to benefit a select few.

People are finally noticing the fallacy that underpins the rhetoric that is thrust in our faces by those in control of our society. The sense of personal and collective trauma experienced by those within the black community in the past couple of months has made us fed up, angry and tired. I've been focused on trying

to turn this anger and frustration that I've been feeling into something positive. I've been reflecting on the information that I receive, thinking about all of standpoints that I take for granted and view as common sense.

During this period of reflection, I've realised that cultural consumption is so important at times of crisis. How we choose to engage with the news, media publications, social media, music, TV etc. needs to change. On an individual level, critical thinking must be at the centre of how we digest information. It's important to be actively critiquing parts of society that remain unquestioned, because most of the time, it is this supposed neutrality that allows their brutality to permeate. I've embarked on journey of critique in relation to how I see the role of prisons in society, and I hope to carry it into more areas of thinking.

But this reflection and critique is only the first step of generating real change. With reflection must come action, and with action comes renewal. It's easy to be consumed by the cycle of thinking, educating and reflecting, and never do anything about it. Without action, we aren't going anywhere. Now that I know more than I did earlier this year, I've been seeing which organisations I can support that have been doing the work already. If that means engaging with their content, donating to their causes, or attending their events (which at the moment are all virtual), it's important to translate that education into real action.

I'm not saying I have all of the answers, because I don't. I'm still learning about how I as an individual can make real change. Reflection is a continuous process; we need to continue to speak out and learn. It just starts with refusing to be a passive recipient of the information around us and widening our gaze.

## Written by Timi Sotire

*Timi Sotire (she/her) graduated with a BA in Human, Social and Political Sciences from the University of Cambridge, and is currently working in Marketing. As a freelance writer, her work focuses on issues pertaining to music, culture, and societal issues.*



# The Judges





## Kem Ihenacho

Kem Ihenacho is a partner at global law firm Latham & Watkins. He is the Global Vice Chair of the Private Equity Practice and Co-Chair of the firm's Africa Practice Group. He is an M&A lawyer with more than 20 years of experience, focusing on complex cross border private equity, infrastructure, and M&A transactions. Prior to joining Latham he was a partner at a Magic Circle law firm.

Kem has been actively involved in recruitment and diversity initiatives in the law for many years and mentors many young lawyers and professionals. He was one of the chairs of the Latham global recruitment committee and for many years has sat on the advisory board at Rare. He is also a director of the not for profit enterprise International Lawyers for Africa.

Kem studied law at Cardiff University. He trained with a regional law firm before joining a Magic Circle firm as a junior associate. Kem is a keen sportsman and spends most weekends trying to keep up with his three young sons.



## Sophie Chandaoka

### **Global COO, Shared Services and Banking Operations, Morgan Stanley**

Sophie is Global COO of Morgan Stanley's Shared Services and Banking Operations. Prior to that, she was EMEA CAO of Morgan Stanley's Legal and Compliance Division. This followed four years as Head of Group Treasury (Legal) at Virgin Money leading execution of corporate finance activity in excess of £13bn. Once a Senior Associate at Baker McKenzie, she advised NIKE, The Body Shop, Citi, Macquarie Bank and others. She is the recipient of many industry awards and has been featured in the *Financial Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Management Today* and *The Power List of Black Britons*. She is an Ambassador of the 30% Club, Co-founder of the Black British Business Awards and Strategic Advisor to Morgan Stanley's African and Caribbean Business Alliance. Sophie serves on the International Presence Committee of the Executive Leadership Council (ELC), the preeminent membership organisation committed to increasing the number of global black executives in c-suites, on corporate boards and in global enterprises.

Sophie is also Chair of the Advisory Panel of The Network of Networks (TNON) BAME/Multicultural Chapter. TNON brings together employee resource group (ERG) leaders from over 55 significant corporations to develop and drive best practices for diversity and inclusion initiatives. TNON ensures that network leaders are properly trained to be effective change agents and lead ERGs that are strategically relevant to their businesses. She is a Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow and has served on the Boards of Trustees of Sentebale and Protimos. Sentebale was founded by Prince Harry to support children affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa. In 2018 she was recognised by Her Majesty The Queen for her contribution in the Commonwealth diaspora as part of the convening of the Commonwealth Heads of Government.





## Tia Angela Counts

**Global CIB and EMEA Head of Advancing Black Leaders,  
JPMorgan Chase & Co. London, England**

Tia Counts is the Global Corporate & Investment Bank and EMEA Head of Advancing Black Leaders (ABL) for JP Morgan, responsible for leading and driving the ABL strategy to deliver an increased level of focus to attract, develop, retain and advance top black talent at all levels of the organisation. A senior leader in the region, Tia also contributes to advancing the broader diversity and inclusion agenda at JP Morgan, ensuring that critical initiatives are aligned with the overall talent management and diversity strategies of the firm.

Prior to her current role, Tia was a senior lawyer in JP Morgan's Legal Department, providing strategic legal counsel to the Corporate & Investment Bank. Tia has over 20 years' experience specialising in domestic and cross border investment banking both as a lawyer and revenue producer having worked as a cross asset-class structurer of financial products.

Tia joined JP Morgan in 2012 from Morgan Stanley where she held a variety of senior roles in London and New York. Tia began her legal career in Clifford Chance's New York office where she worked in the Derivatives and Debt Capital Markets team, with a focus on Latin America.

Tia received her J.D. from Columbia Law School and her BA from the University of California at Berkeley.

Passionate about art, culture and community, Tia serves as a Trustee on the Board of the Camden Arts Centre in London.

She lives in South London, with her husband and two children.



## Tom Chigbo

Tom is a Senior Organiser for Citizens UK, a community organising alliance of faith, education and civil society groups who take action together for the common good. His role involves building relationships across diverse communities, delivering leadership training and campaigning for social justice. Over the last 10 years, Tom has equipped hundreds of people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds with the skills to participate in public life, hold politicians to account and win positive change for their community.

Tom began his career at Citizens UK with Money Mentors, an innovative community financial literacy campaign in response to the UK recession. He then spent 3 years as a Community Organiser in the London Borough of Lambeth, successfully campaigning for the local council to become an accredited Living Wage employer in 2012. He later directed CitySafe, an initiative that rebuilt relationships between young people, small businesses and the Metropolitan Police and opened over 600 safe havens across the capital.

In 2015, he launched Leeds Citizens, an alliance of 30 faith, education and community groups campaigning to address issues of low pay, mental health and youth opportunities around the city. Their campaign successes include a new citywide primary care mental health service, improved dementia care services to better meet the needs of BME communities, £500,000 worth of housing estate repairs, road safety improvements, reduced bus fares for 16-18 year olds and pay rises for the lowest paid staff at Leeds City Council.

Tom holds a BA in Geography from the University of Cambridge, where he made history by becoming the university's first black Student Union President. During his term of office, he successfully campaigned for the university to fund a Student Advice Service and a multimillion-pound sports centre. His achievements were recognised by Rare, who named him the first No.1 Rare Rising Star in 2009. Tom also has an MA in Community Organising from Queen Mary, University of London. He serves on the Board of Directors for Amnesty International UK, an NGO working around the world to promote human rights.

# Closing Statements



# Words from Sophie Chandauka

I have had the privilege of serving as a member of the judging panel for Rare Rising Stars since 2018, having read each publication since the campaign was launched.

We have become accustomed to Rare Rising Stars shining a bright light on Black students who are extraordinarily gifted high-achievers by any measure of excellence.

The Rare Rising Stars of 2020 are breathtaking! They can be distinguished from previous cohorts I've seen in that, collectively, they demonstrate confidence in pursuing business ventures that deliver commercial value and, in most instances, meaningful social impact at the same time. They are remarkably ambitious, creative and commercially savvy.

The Rare Rising Stars of 2020 not only demonstrate entrepreneurial flair, they leverage technology as their game changer, connecting beyond borders for strategic reasons and growth opportunities. They are particularly empowered, mature and resourceful. They are global in their outlook and ambition.

Recent global tragedies have provided a stark reminder that racial and ethnic inequalities are still rife in all spheres of life. I read the biographies of these Black stars and I felt #power! I sign-off feeling inspired and deep in thought and hopeful that this group will be able to find their way in this nightmare we all found ourselves in.

The Rare Rising Stars of 2020 are my ancestors' wildest dreams come true.

The Rare Rising Stars of 2020 will be power the change we yearn to see.

With very best wishes,

Sophie Chandauka

# Words from Our Sponsors



## **University of Oxford**

This year's Rising Stars have truly excelled; we are delighted to see these talents and their stories being celebrated. The University of Oxford is thrilled to work with programmes such as Rare Recruitment's Rising Stars and continues to support the recognition and nurturing of Black students throughout the UK. Congratulations to this year's Rising Stars; you are a powerful source of inspiration, and I wish you all the very best in the future.

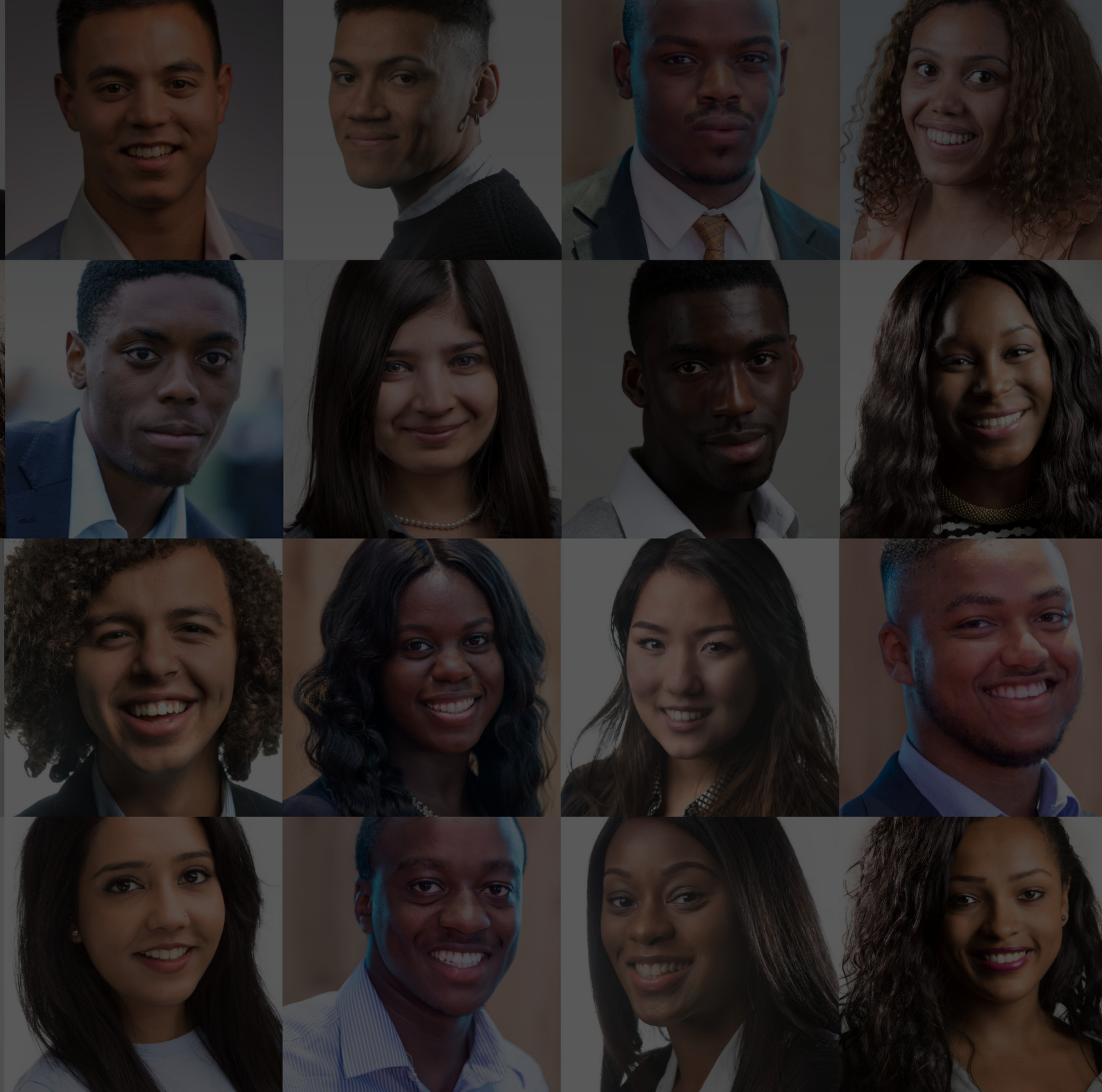
**Dr Samina Khan, Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach**



## **University of Cambridge**

"One of the most powerful ways of encouraging students to fulfil their potential is to show them the extraordinary things that others like them have achieved. Rare's Rising Stars is not just a celebration of talented individuals, it is a call to action for the next generation of students to challenge themselves and succeed. The University of Cambridge is delighted to be a sponsor and wishes this year's Rising Stars the very best as they pursue their ambitions."

**Jon Beard, Director, Cambridge Admissions Office**



LEADERS IN DIVERSITY  
GRADUATE RECRUITMENT

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# About Rare Rising Stars

Rare Rising Stars allows us to recognise and celebrate extraordinary candidates. Each year, we showcase the achievements of the best black students in the UK. Since the development of our Contextual Recruitment System, we have been fortunate enough to be able to shine a light on all overachievers, by setting each candidate's achievements in context. We are delighted to now be recognising the achievements of more candidates, on a wider scale.

We are privileged to encounter incredibly high achievers on a day-to-day basis and work with clients who really care about changing the face of the City. Now in its eleventh year, we are once again pleased to be able to share the stories of our ten Stars - stories of ambition, resilience and passion. We hope that this celebration of excellence continues to inspire young black students to contribute to their communities and pursue their dreams.

Our nationwide search made it clear that there are many more high achievers to be discovered. Our judges Kem Ihenacho, Sophie Chandauka, Tia Counts and Tom Chigbo had the unenviable task of selecting ten finalists from yet another remarkable list of black students.

We aim to continue developing a community of excellence by sharing the stories of our ten Stars, role models for their own generation.

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