

RARE RISING STARS 2021

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 and the University worked in partnership with the pharmaceutical company, AstraZeneca, to develop and administer one of the world's first Covid-19 vaccine.

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.

Due to the unprecedented global climate and the disruption caused to education by the Covid-19 pandemic, the University has adapted its outreach offering to accommodate potential applicants, regardless of their geographic location.

Physical insight programmes have been relaunched as digital experiences. These include the UNIQ UK state school outreach programme and the Target Oxbridge programme for students of Black heritage. The University of Oxford Open Day programme has run online for the last two years, and in 2020 more than 35,000 potential applicants participated. On a regional level, the University is involved in targeted bespoke outreach work across the country, in areas where young people are less likely to pursue higher education, such as Wales and the Northeast, and these programmes have also been adjusted for online use.

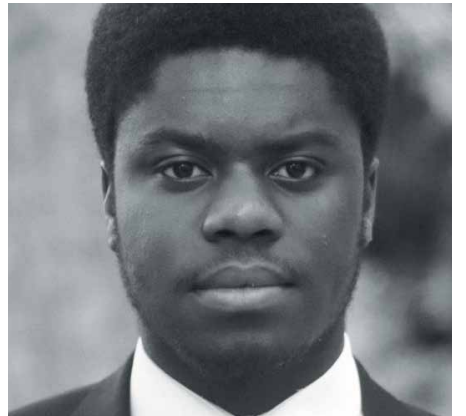
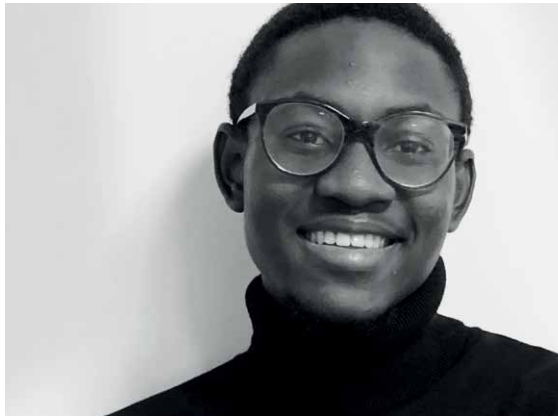
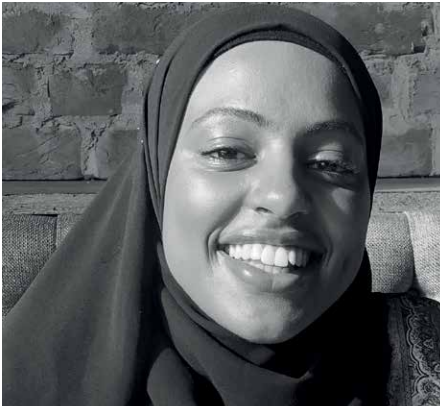
These online offerings reproduce all the key elements of physical outreach programmes – such as academic study sessions and expert admissions advice – as well as the chance to meet and chat with current students and hear their individual insights.

Other pandemic-specific adjustments include running a Book Club through the Oxplore online learning resource, which is aimed at children aged 11-18 years old. The online book club was intended to encourage children's literacy during lockdown and has been so successful it will run in the next academic year. The online component of the Opportunity Oxford programme has also been expanded, so that 300 more offer holders, whose education has been particularly affected by the pandemic, can feel more prepared for their studies and confident about starting at Oxford this autumn.

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. It remains focused on achieving its aim of one in four incoming undergraduates drawing from under-represented backgrounds at Oxford by 2023.

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Foreword



The past six months have been long. By turns, 2021 has felt never-ending, suspended, hopeful, frustrating and sometimes devastating. We have grappled with chaotic tiers, ongoing uncertainty, picnics in the rain and the ennui of life under yet-another-lockdown. Mostly, it has just been exhausting. Yet throughout it all, we have endured. We have not only survived but we have thrived, and it is in this vein of drawing strength in crisis, forging on and regenerating, that I am proud to present to you this year's publication.

This theme of regeneration seems entirely fitting as we reflect upon the one-year anniversary of George Floyd's death, and its material impact upon Black communities, in reigniting questions of justice, equality and our common humanity. It is equally evoked by the vaccine rollout, and those who have worked so tirelessly to sustain our NHS throughout this difficult period. We have not only built back from the depths of this pandemic, but emerged stronger than ever, more reflective and compassionate, with a greater understanding of what it means to be human. Indeed, we have all learnt what it means to truly 'regenerate'.

Each of these individuals have contributed to the regeneration of their communities in different ways. In compiling their stories, I have been privileged to document their resilience, passion and unyielding force for good. It is my hope that reading these accounts of Black excellence provides some much-needed joy in these unfamiliar times and inspires future generations of Black students to pursue their dreams.

Now in its thirteenth year, Rare Rising Stars continues to shine a light on the most talented, inspirational Black students in the UK. We are delighted that previous Stars have become best-selling authors, CEOs, Olympic medallists, award-winning podcasters, musicians, influencers, activists and more. This year's Stars draw from a diversity of fields, spanning youth activism, social entrepreneurship and public health to business and educational access.

This publication has come together thanks to the efforts of a brilliant team. I would like to thank Puneet Tahim for all the support she provided throughout the entire process. I would also like to thank Maxine Monu, for her gift with words, and our designer Sasha Djukicin, for bringing together such a stunning visual publication. To our judges, Kem Ihenacho, Sophie Chadauka, Tia Counts, Jean Tomlin and Tom Chigbo, thank you for taking the time to help select this year's stars. Finally, I would like to thank our sponsors, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Oxford, for making these awards possible year on year. It is humbling to work with such an incredible group of people.

Mariel Orford-Hall
Business Development Executive & Editor of Rare
Rising Stars 2021

The Stars



Eunice Amankwah

Political Economy | University of Birmingham | Youth Activism

Eunice grew up on a council estate in Tottenham, one of the most deprived areas in London, and has lived there her entire life. As her father relocated between Ghana and the UK growing up, Eunice lived predominantly with her mother and four siblings, attending three different primary schools as a young girl. She recalls growing up amid poverty and violence, in a small, overcrowded three-bedroom flat. Despite the odds, Eunice achieved 6A*s and 3As at GCSE. A combination of her parents' support and these grades encouraged Eunice to move to a more academic sixth form, and aged sixteen, she started her A Level studies at a local grammar school in the neighbouring borough of Enfield.

During her time at secondary school, Eunice grew increasingly frustrated with the rise in knife crime and budget cuts to education and youth services which disproportionately affected state school pupils like herself. Coming from a challenging area of Tottenham, she explains that knife crime was the norm and Eunice recounts losing many friends to knife crime or prison. However, Eunice wanted to change the trajectory for people like herself and younger generations to come. A turning point came when her favourite youth club announced that it was closing down due to budget cuts, depriving Eunice and her friends of a treasured after-school space.

Eunice was devastated and sought to try and find an avenue to channel her frustration, where she could make a real difference. She ended up applying for Enfield Youth Parliament, where she would go on to hold various roles over the next three years. This

involved writing a manifesto and campaigning around her school, encouraging her peers to vote for her. As Enfield Youth Councillor, she explored issues such as how the council should combat cuts to youth services and mapped out strategies to incorporate young people's opinions into future projects such as Cycle Enfield. This role led to her being elected twice for the UK Youth Parliament, as Deputy and Head for the Enfield borough.

During her time as UK Youth Parliament member, Eunice represented more than 8,000 young people from across her constituency on a national scale. Her role entailed advising young people on potential career paths, visiting schools and running a national youth campaign called 'Make your Mark', where Eunice single-handedly collected over 10,000 ballot sheets encouraging 11–18-year-olds across the UK to vote on prominent policy issues. The campaign led Eunice to debate in the House of Commons on issues such as implementing a curriculum to better prepare young people for life and tackling knife crime, in front of other youth parliament members, MPs and then Speaker John Bercow at the age of sixteen. This was shown live on BBC news and viewed by over 30,000 people on national television.

Eunice's enduring passion for politics and economics led her to study Political Economy at the University of Birmingham. She was also offered a place to read Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE) at the University of Oxford, but unfortunately missed her offer by one grade. Now in her second year at Birmingham, Eunice has successfully secured 3 scholarships for academic achievement (The Miranda Brawn Scholarship, Black Heart Foundation, and the University of Birmingham Chamberlain Award). She has pursued her keen interest in finance, having interned at Aviva, Morgan Stanley, and the Civil service, alongside successfully completing the 2020 Aleto Foundation leadership course. She also sits on the team for The Bridge LLC, a student-run investment club. Currently, Eunice is looking forward to starting at J.P. Morgan as an incoming Summer Analyst in 2022.

When she is not studying, Eunice enjoys giving back to the community through mentoring younger students into the route of politics and banking, and by helping to support Noire Network, an organisation founded by Eunice's mentor that aims to support African and Caribbean students to access corporate spaces. Throughout the first Covid-19 lockdown, Eunice also volunteered full-time at her mother's school, helping to cover SEN staff with underlying health conditions and working closely with autistic children. Though no longer working full-time, this is something she has continued throughout her university holidays.



James Appiah III

Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS) | University of Cambridge | Youth Activism and Entrepreneurship

James grew up in Stratford, Newham, with his three siblings and parents, but the family later moved to Romford, Essex. Ironically, James reflects, Stratford had more issues, but it also had a stronger sense of community, and this would serve as the driving force for much of James' later life.

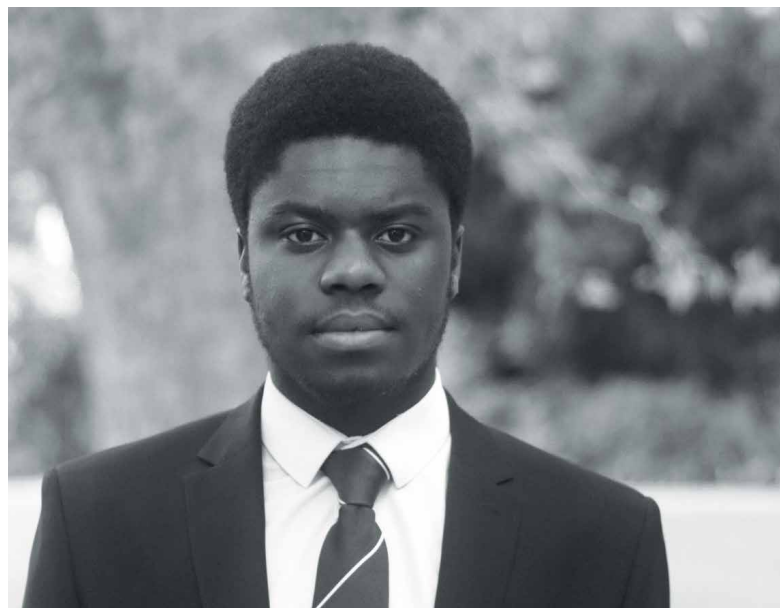
In latter secondary school, James became involved with a charity called CAFOD, which is heavily involved in global development issues. This was one of his first interactions with international politics, and James would go on to lead a session on Palestine at his school.

Sixth form saw James develop his interest in politics further when he joined TELCO (now Citizens UK) and became the Co-Chair for his borough. This involved facilitating discussions on knife crime and feeding back youth opinion to Scotland Yard, local MPs and the Mayor, for which James was featured on LBC Radio and the BBC. He also hosted a march attended by over 70 people at Stratford Shopping Centre in a campaign for the venue to create safe havens for victims of knife crime.

Later, James became a Youth Parliament Select Committee Member and a Member of the British Youth Council. This involved meeting regularly with MPs and community leaders to discuss a range of issues, including preventative knife crime measures, social media, youth culture, parenting and schools. Shortly afterwards, James received the opportunity to sit on the UK Youth Advisory Forum, where he worked with various branches of government to tackle serious violence across the UK. Social media was a particular focus of these discussions, and James played a pivotal role in debating policy issues such as how to prevent knives being displayed casually on social media platforms, and how social media companies might be better regulated. In Year 12, he advised the Cabinet Office on their Serious Violence Strategy and was later nominated to join the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. Here, he spoke to over 40 MPs on topics such as gender scrutiny, mental health, toxic masculinity, and his experiences as a young, Black male in the UK.

A range of internships followed, solidifying James' desire to study Politics at university. This included a week at Rothschild in their healthcare sector, and two work experiences with his local MPs. These placements provided him with an insight into the workings of Westminster, however dealing with constituency letters (and the concerns of genuinely distressed citizens) also highlighted the bureaucracy of the system to him, further cementing his desire to go into policy.

Now in his first year at the University of Cambridge, James has continued to devote himself to empowering young people through economics, politics and education. One example of this is his



founding of The Elevation Network, a think-tank-like platform which brings together influencers, entrepreneurs, youth activists, speakers and other prominent individuals to discuss careers advice and inspire and support young people. During the first lockdown, James hosted three series to over 100 students, including a panel discussion with five ACS Presidents and business professionals from McKinsey & Company. Building upon his leadership experience as Head Boy at school, James now heads up a team from Russell Group universities across the UK.

James is also the co-founder of Black Ivy Partners, a student-led investment fund and financial literacy initiative which aims to educate young people about cryptocurrency, asset classes and more. Established during the first lockdown, the team posts regular educational content on various social media platforms. Since launching, they have amassed almost 900 followers and their mailing list includes more than 350 people. They have also created nine internships to date, whereby students are encouraged to develop their commercial awareness, research and financial analysis skills. This interest in finance has led James to secure two summer internships at BlackRock.

In January 2021, James founded the Tomorrow's Story podcast, where he hosts frequent discussions ranging from current affairs to philosophy to public policy. He has released 18 episodes to date, with close to 2000 listens. The aim of the podcast is to encourage students from social mobility backgrounds to debate prominent issues, and topics have spanned knife crime and the pandemic, to the treatment of Meghan Markle and abolishing private schools.

James currently serves as Access Officer of the Cambridge Union. He hopes to embark upon a career in banking, before becoming an MP and/or policy advisor.



Rihab El-Hussain

Law | University of Cambridge | Academics and University Access

Born to first generation Sudanese parents, Rihab grew up in Harrow in northwest London, as the second oldest of five siblings. Rihab's elder sister was born severely disabled, and she recalls travelling back and forth between doctor's appointments as a child. Despite this, Rihab admits that she did not realise how a large a part of her childhood this was until she started at university, as family trips to the hospital and caring responsibilities were just a normal aspect of everyday life.

Rihab was state educated and attended Bentley Wood High School for the duration of her secondary schooling. She thoroughly enjoyed school, and developed a knack for leadership early on, becoming Head Girl in Year 13. As the only Oxbridge applicant from her school, the UCAS process was daunting and Rihab had to use her initiative to research the practical steps she would need to take. Furthermore, whilst Rihab's family were always greatly supportive of her aspirations, neither of her parents had attended a UK university and could offer little practical guidance. Unperturbed, Rihab determined to study Law at Cambridge and successfully secured her offer with A*A*A at A Level.

Whilst balancing a rigorous Law degree, Rihab is also the founder of in2_law, a social initiative designed to help students from disadvantaged backgrounds study Law at top universities. In 2019, in2_law organised mock interviews for 65 students from access backgrounds. In 2020, in2_law increased their impact by over 300%, receiving over 500 applications to their programme and organising nearly 200 mock interviews for social mobility candidates with interview offers at Oxford and Cambridge. So far, eight Law offer holders have been confirmed across both universities, but this number continues to grow as students informally feed back to the organisers.

Rihab also organised a UCAS webinar for approximately 50 Year 12 students in the summer between school and her starting university. This consisted of four weekly sessions breaking down the UCAS application process and providing students with practical study tips and personal statement advice. Rihab has also run various Instagram Live sessions with Oxbridge students from across the UK, culminating in a collaboration with Team UPside, another youth-led community organisation that works to tackle information gaps and support young people reach their full academic potential. Most recently, Rihab organised an essay competition over the summer of 2020, encouraging entrants (20 in the prize's first year) to consider five questions from various areas of philosophy, morality, politics, and international law. Through this essay prize, students were able to develop their academic reading and research skills. The pandemic has also provided opportunities for Rihab and her team to improve

their regional outreach, and she is currently working with a school in Nottingham to formalise their mentoring programme.

Alongside this, Rihab is the Founder and President of the Cambridge University Sudanese Society, where she organises events providing the student community with opportunities to explore Sudanese culture and history. Rihab is also actively involved in student life at Downing College, Cambridge and has spearheaded a campaign to increase diversity and inclusion, leading to the college hiring a new member of staff that focuses specifically on diversity and inclusion training for all. Rihab currently sits on the Racial Justice Committee, along with other senior members of college, and has overseen the introduction of a Black and ethnic minority-specific mental health fund from October 2020.

Outside all of this, Rihab continues to work as an academic tutor at her secondary school, marking the girls' A level work and running revision sessions to help them meet their target grades. She was also selected as a PASS scholar for the Inner Temple in January 2020 and was previously selected to complete a summer programme at Harvard Law School as the recipient of the John Butterfield Award.



Folu Ogunyeye

Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS) | University of Cambridge | Business, Technology and Social Entrepreneurship

Folu grew up in Milton Keynes, just outside London, with her parents and older brother. She was raised in a traditional Nigerian household, and church formed a large part of her upbringing. It was Folu's church that enabled her to attend a private boarding school from Years 9 to 11, awarding her a scholarship raised by the congregation in recognition of her achievements. Prior to that, she had attended the same local comprehensive school as her brother. This strong connection with her church community would serve as the motivating force for much of Folu's later life.

Following a move back home to a local grammar school for sixth form, Folu maintained a strong work ethic and excelled across her A Level studies. Despite this, things became increasingly challenging at home due to her father's struggles with bipolar disorder, and Folu admits that school was her outlet during this difficult time. Her resilience saw her attain two A*s and an A, securing her Human, Social and Political Sciences (HSPS) place at the University of Cambridge.

In her first year at Cambridge, Folu mentored four Black female sixth form students through the HSPS admissions process, helping all four to gain offers. Despite the financial difficulties her family were facing at the time, due to her father being hospitalised, she also persevered to juggle her academic workload, two committee positions (ACS Welfare Officer and International Development Officer for Cambridge Hub), and grant applications to fund the two months she spent volunteering in Tanzania that summer with the Cambridge Development Initiative.

In her second year, she continued to pursue opportunities to serve the Black Cambridge community and was selected as a Co-Researcher on the University's Access and Participatory Plan: Participatory Action Research (APP PAR) project. Here, Folu worked in a team with two other Black students to research solutions to the issue of academic attainment gaps among Black students. They compiled a report on the strategies employed across various universities to support Black students, before presenting these ideas to the Vice-Chancellor. They also organised surveys asking students about their experiences, mental health, and the support systems available to them. Folu later proposed a Black Students' Advisory Hub as a centralised physical and online space providing academic and pastoral support for Black students. After presenting these ideas in February 2020, her proposal was selected by the Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor for Education for further research and has since been committed to funding. Folu plans to develop a physical office space to support Black students once the Covid-19 situation improves.



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Folu is also the founder of Vamos Careers (Vamos), a social enterprise that provides careers support to disadvantaged students by making personalised tools and resources available online for this digitally native generation. Folu observed that traditional forms of career guidance, most notably university career services, were being less and less utilised and she founded Vamos to fill this gap. Since launching in December 2019, the organisation has worked to achieve this goal through producing multimedia careers content. The online platform includes blog posts, video series and newsletters, and is split into three categories: exploration, preparation, and action. As CEO, Folu heads a team of six and has worked to develop Vamos into a viable business model. This includes Folu's plans to grow Vamos' student user base through creating collaborative career resources on their app with relevant student societies and start-ups, as well as with relevant higher education charities and graduate recruitment agencies. They also plan to generate traffic towards the app through their online publication, Vamos Insights (launched 1st March 2021), where the team interview prominent students and young professionals across various industries and produce reviews and recommendations on various types of career resources.

Folu noted that too often, the only way to work out one's careers options was via extremely competitive insight schemes and sought to democratise this access to careers insights through Vamos. She designed an app where students will be able to enjoy a centralised space which connects them to the career resources and opportunities that best fit their individual needs according to background, skills/interests, and current stage in their career journey (for example, recommending Rare Recruitment's Advancing Black Leaders programme to a Black student interested in banking or technology).

Within one month of ideation of her initial concept, Vamos was shortlisted as a Downing Enterprise finalist, where they pitched to a board of investors. Although the team were not selected as winners, Folu continued to refine the business plan, and in October 2020, she was announced as one of 64 individuals selected out of over 750 applications for the 2020/21 Innovate UK Young Innovators Award. This award provides a £5,000 grant, 12 months of one-to-one business support, and publicity opportunities to be a role model for young people – all of which Folu has put towards growing Vamos. Currently, the team is working on the app Folu has designed in partnership with U.S. developer Apsy.io, which began Beta-testing in April 2021.

One of Folu's proudest achievements is being able to give back to her local community in Milton Keynes by volunteering on the advisory board of her church's educational charity, SIEVEMK Gateway (<https://www.sievemkgateway.org.uk/>) is a local community-led charity that offers affordable teaching, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities to young people from ethnic minority backgrounds. After the charity was negatively impacted by COVID-19, Folu designed and led the fundraising proposal for an e-learning program, which was then selected for a £40,000 grant from the Social Enterprise Support Fund (SESF).

After graduating this summer, Folu looks forward to starting as a Human Resources Analyst at Blackrock's Atlanta office.

Hope Oloye

PhD Ecological Study of Brain and Behaviour | University College London | Education and Social Activism

Hope grew up in Newham, East London, with her parents and younger brother. Her mother worked as a nurse before moving into NHS management, and her father ran a nursery. She recalls many financial troubles growing up, and a desire to leave behind the deprivation of her area (though not for lack of love for her community), but outside this, her childhood was stable and she excelled at school. She also led a rich extracurricular life, participating in every team sport her school offered, as well as music and competitive swimming.

Aged 13, Hope attended a Neuroscience lecture at University College London, sparking her interest in the topic of child educational development. After that, Hope immersed herself in further research, and determined to become a neuroscientist. Initially, her teachers encouraged her to change her mind – perhaps a youth councillor or teacher was more realistic – but Hope would not be shaken and went on to secure two A*s and an A at A Level, enabling her to take up her Neuroscience place at the University of Oxford.

There she founded Thinking Black, an educational organisation that has since been featured in the Guardian and on LBC Radio. Beginning with an essay competition, Thinking Black engages students from Year 8 to 12 in various expressive mediums, including creative writing, public speaking, critical thinking and formal essay writing. The programme was conceived as a means of providing academic enrichment and further study outside of the formal school curriculum to Black students from under-resourced schools. Hope observed that many Black students from these schools possessed the necessary grades and intellectual curiosity to study at top universities, but they often lacked the same access to extracurricular opportunities as their privately educated counterparts, making it harder to demonstrate their passion for the subject at application. As 2017 JCR President of her college, Hope approached the access fellow of Pembroke to highlight the lack of Black students and pitch her ideas, managing to secure £100,000 in funding towards the Thinking Black project.

The programme also provides skills sessions and mentorship alongside interdisciplinary courses run by paid Oxford students, which explore the interactions between race and subjects such as feminism and healthcare disparities. Programmes have so far supported over 200 students from across the country and now include Essay Writing, Art History, Creative Writing, Public Speaking and Brain Sciences. Over the past year, 65 students were selected to engage with Thinking Black's online events, spanning workshops, lecture series and one-on-one essay guidance.

After her undergraduate degree, Hope was selected from over 300 applicants for a fully funded and paid Junior Research Fellowship at NYU's Social Neuroscience Lab. Under renowned Professor David Amodio, she explored the impact of economic scarcity on the neural encoding of Black faces and the resultant impact on discrimination and prejudice for a year.

Alongside running Thinking Black, Hope is currently studying for a PhD at UCL as part of the fully funded Ecological Brain Doctoral Programme, specialising in Auditory Cognitive Neuroscience. Here, she explores the impact of sounds and the environment on learning, memory and cognition.

Hope is a committee member of the Oxford Black Alumni Network and works with the University's ACS to help support current Black students at Oxford. She is also part of a consultative group at Pembroke College, Oxford, helping to inform equality and inclusion policy, which involves providing research for racial equity reports and conducting discussion groups with past and present students. Hope was recently awarded a place as part of the alumni portrait award series and is the youngest person to have their portrait hung in the college's Main Hall.



© Photo by Keith Barnes



Khadija Owusu

**Medicine | St George's, University of London |
Charity, Health and Medical Access**

Khadija started life in a council flat on Broadwater Farm Estate in north London's Tottenham, before the family moved to Finsbury Park. She grew up in a single-parent household, with her mother and younger brothers, and attended a local comprehensive school until the age of 16. Her mother worked as a part-time cleaner, and Khadija recalls finances were hard – one of her main motivations for becoming a doctor. She also cites watching her brother grow up with sickle cell anemia, taking the family in and out of hospital, and observing how hard the medical staff worked to deliver his care.

Khadija excelled throughout school, and in March 2012 was invited to the White House by Michelle Obama, for an inspirational essay she had written about her mother. There she met with The First Lady over five days to discuss effecting positive change as women, spoke with other Black and ethnic minority women in power, and volunteered with a charity. Returning to the UK, Khadija determined to achieve her goal of becoming a doctor. That same year she received the Women in STEM Award, presented by HRH Princess Anne. Khadija also won a full scholarship to Ashbourne College sixth form, where she completed her A Levels with A*AA and secured a medical offer at St George's, University of London.

In her third year of university, Khadija co-founded Melanin Medics, a registered charity which works to increase representation of African and Caribbean-descent students within the medical profession. As Director of Programmes, Khadija coordinates all outreach work, which involves going into state schools or schools that have a predominantly Black and ethnic minority population to educate pupils as young as six on careers in Medicine. Over the years the organisation has reached over 4,000 young people and boasts a 91% success rate of supporting anyone who has interacted with them into medical school. They have a combined social reach of more than 10,000 followers and are the largest intergenerational



association of Black medics in the UK. To date, Melanin Medics has received official sponsorship from various organisations, including £20,000 from the British Medical Association. In July 2020, Khadija oversaw the launch of their mentorship programme in partnership with Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge. This programme has supported 25 students to make competitive Medicine applications with six monthly sessions, including subject lectures and soft skills advice from Cambridge academics.

Khadija is the President of the Medical Elective Equipment Fund, a project that helps students evaluate the use of medical resources in healthcare settings in low-income countries when on their elective. This is operated as an online course available on the FutureLearn platform. The fund also provides these students with the opportunity to donate equipment using grants that have been donated to the project (currently up to £3000).

In addition to these responsibilities, Khadija works as an ambassador at Medics2You and the Grow, Unite and Build Africa (GUBA) Enterprise. Medics2You is a healthcare technology start-up that aims to deliver quality patient-centred care to the continent of Africa via video consultations. GUBA Enterprise is a social enterprise dedicated to the advancement of native Africans and the African diaspora through initiatives such as skills workshops and business coaching. As of April 2020, Khadija serves as a Trustee for the charity Raising Futures Kenya. Their work includes practical trade and business skills training via community organisations, alongside tailored well-being support, which enables young Kenyans to overcome past traumas and realise their ambitions. She has spoken at various national and international conferences on racism in Medicine and common Black and ethnic minority healthcare issues, and been featured on BBC, ITV and Channel 5 News.





Momin Mohamed

MA Law with LPC | BPP University | Charity and Social Activism

Momin is an activist, anti-FGM campaigner, and aspiring lawyer.

The youngest of four siblings, Momin spent the early part of his life in Sudan. Aged nine, Momin fled the civil war in South Sudan with his family and moved to the UK to pursue a better life. Initially based in the Hounslow area, this was a particularly testing period for Momin's parents, who had lost many family members to the civil war, and the emotional strain led to his parents' separation almost immediately afterwards.

After the separation, Momin moved to Bristol with his mother and three siblings, where he attended a local comprehensive secondary school. Unfortunately, Momin's school was in an area known for racial tensions, and he recalls troubled relationships with teachers and students. Despite this, Momin was an active member of the student body, and frequently put himself forward for leadership roles on the student council.

At 15, Momin became one of the founding members of Integrate UK, a youth-led charity that campaigns against Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and other gender-based issues such as violence against women and girls, child sexual exploitation and grooming. In addition to gender equality, the charity aims to promote racial equality, through educating on topics such as Islamophobia, extremism and radicalisation and microaggressions. Momin explains that it all started in 2009, when a friend from a neighbouring school learnt of a rise in FGM amongst girls within the school. Alarmed by these events, Momin and his friend decided to research FGM further and discovered that it was affecting many people within their communities. Momin and friends began meeting up after school to brainstorm how they might tackle this issue.

At first, it was incredibly difficult discussing such sensitive subject matter, and many people within the community questioned why he wanted to concern himself with such "women's issues". However, Momin persisted, retorting that these were issues which should concern everyone, and put together various media projects educating people on FGM.

One video in particular, '#MyClitoris', attracted over 100,000 views on YouTube. Momin later received a letter from then Secretary of State for Education Michael Gove MP, asking him to compile a research report on FGM. After Momin had shared his findings with the government, Gove went on to write an open letter to every teacher in England and Wales explaining that FGM was on the rise and outlining the signs to watch out for as members of an educational body. Momin's work was pivotal in the decision to introduce safeguarding leads into every school (for issues such as FGM and child protection), and Gove later made FGM a



mandatory part of the PSHE curriculum. Over the years, Momin has taken on increasingly challenging roles at Integrate UK and progressed to Lead Outreach Worker, training and supporting young people to deliver a wide range of peer-education workshops. Momin also personally delivers training to frontline professionals including nurses, doctors and lawyers. The organisation currently engages around 150 young people annually in a range of educational and creative activities, and through media resources and lesson plans, the young Outreach team has touched a wider audience of over 7,000 people. To date, Momin has provided consultation to two Prime Ministers (David Cameron and Theresa May), participated in meetings at the Home Office, and was a key member of the European Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN). He did much of this before the age of 17.

When asked what keeps him motivated, Momin replies: "Seeing the damage that was caused by both men and my community, both things of course that I align myself heavily to and form part of my identity; so I thought if I'm not the one that's speaking up, then who will?" He attributes this passion for gender equality to witnessing the dynamics played out in his own household between his mother and father.

After completing his A Levels, Momin studied Law at the University of the West of England (UWE), further pursuing his interest in social justice. During his undergraduate studies, he founded UWE's Diversity in Law Committee and the Bristol Homelessness Project 2018, distributing clothes from over 150 respondents to Help the Homeless and Shelter UK. He is currently pursuing his Masters of Law with the LPC at BPP Law School, Bristol, where he is Lead Student Voice Representative and Lead Diversity and Inclusion Co-Ordinator. BPP featured Momin in their special edition magazine for his work around Integrate UK, advising the United Nations and diversifying the legal industry.

Nwangele Godwin (Emeka) Chukwuemeka

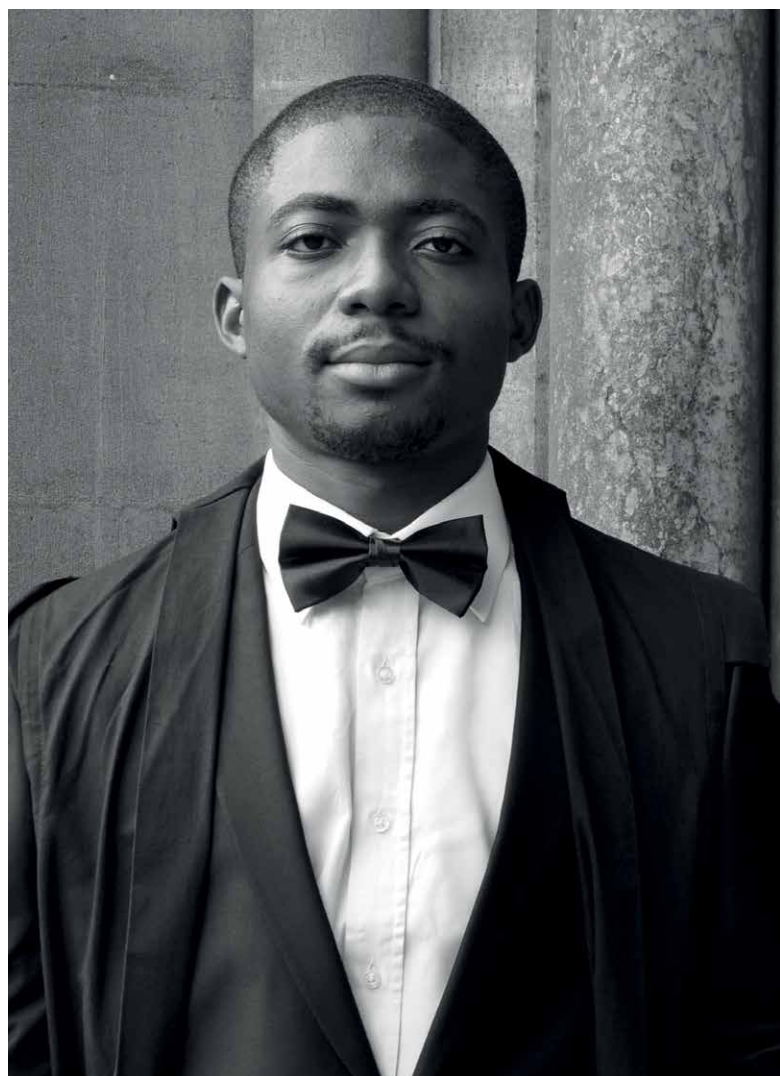
MSc Energy Systems | University of Oxford | Sustainable Energy Entrepreneurship

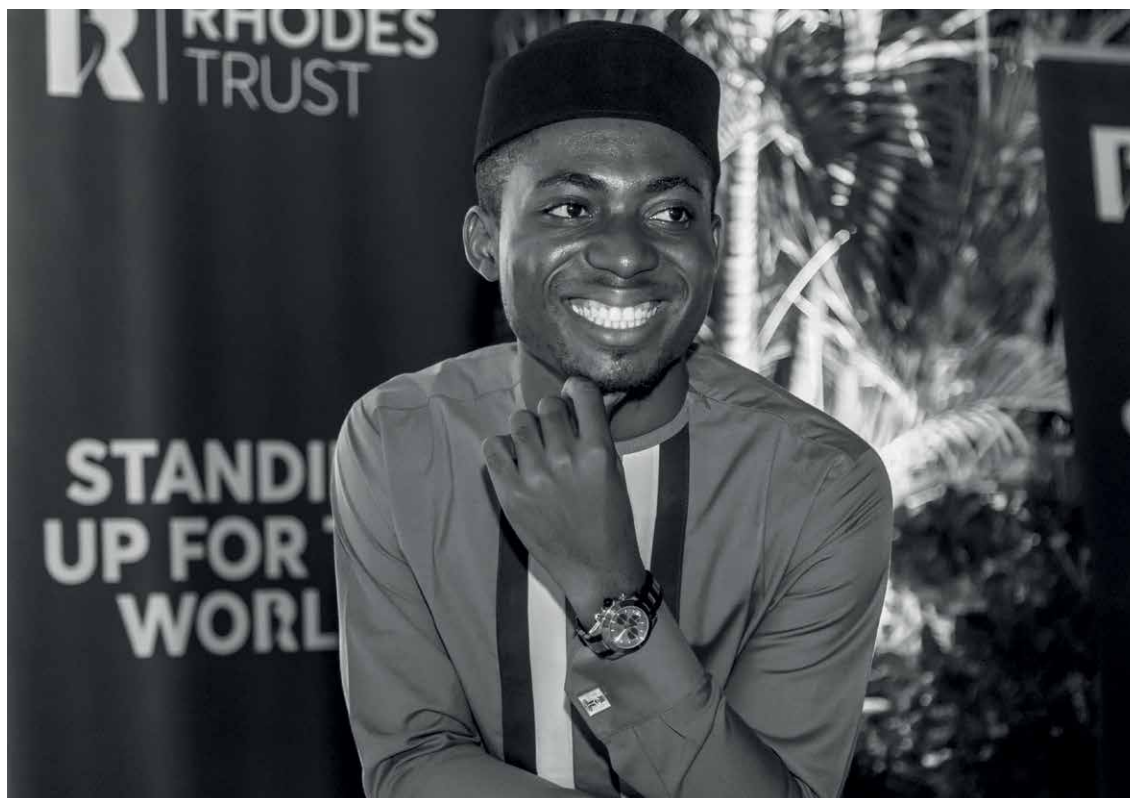
Emeka was born to a family of entrepreneurs in Jos, Nigeria, where he lived with his parents and four siblings. Religious and ethnic tensions broke out in Jos, causing the family to move to the south eastern part of Enugu for Emeka's secondary education. This is where Emeka decided to study electrical engineering, motivated by his parent's constant struggle with patchy electricity provision during his adolescence. This lack of electrical power had a direct impact upon the family's livelihood, and Emeka was determined to make a change.

After completing his studies at the University of Nigeria Secondary School, Emeka received the best Post-Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (Post-UTME) grade amongst all students applying to the Faculty of Engineering Sciences at the University of Nigeria. From there, Emeka emerged as the best graduating student, and in 2018 he moved on to clinch the Best Graduate Engineer Award in Nigeria.

During his final year at university, Emeka joined friends to co-found Greenage Technologies, an organisation that seeks to solve Nigeria's deep-seated energy problems. Emeka noted that many product parts in the electricity space were being imported from other countries, such as China and Germany, resulting in high numbers of inverters being abandoned due to unfamiliar technology or language barriers. Identifying that this was not sustainable, the team started making inverters themselves, with the aim of moving into solar panel energy. By doing so, they planned to reduce the cost of renewable energy deployment by 30%.

Greenage managed to secure a research space at the National Energy Research Centre, where the team built a prototype and sold it to a mentor. He loved the product, after which they began to fine-tune their processes until their inverter was commercially viable.





Growth in the sector required the team to expand from selling only inverters to selling energy. They then began deploying energy products using their inverters to rural users, hospitals and schools, with positive feedback. Under Emeka, Greenage grew from \$100 to \$200,000 in revenue within two years. As news of their success spread, they secured funding rounds that valued the company at two million dollars. Most notably, they have secured partnerships with the United States Africa Development Fund (USADF), Tenece and All On. As a result of his work with Greenage, Emeka won the Keyman Award for Outstanding entrepreneurship displayed by indigenous energy innovations' growth. Other awards and mentions include the USADF Off-Grid Energy Award and The Future Africa Award nomination for technology and innovation.

To date, Emeka is the only Rhodes scholar from west Africa to study an MSc in Energy Systems at the University of Oxford. He recently gained admission to the Said Business School for an MBA and was offered a DPhil placement to develop modular flexible green hydrogen/ammonia power plants that guarantee renewable penetration. He plans to use his knowledge to improve rural electricity access. Since starting at Oxford in 2020, Emeka, together with The Ganglion Initiative and the Enugu State Scholarship Board, has created the Coal City Fellowship. The Fellowship seeks to foster innovation amongst Nigerian youth by matching them with mentors from world-class educational institutions like Oxford and Cambridge. The team is also working with all universities in Enugu State. Along with this, the students receive support to engage in innovative and social-driven projects as part of their all-round development.

Emeka is also part of the team organising the next Oxford Africa Conference, themed 'Rewriting Our Story & Asserting Africa's Future'. With the conference, his team hopes to drive engagement with political, economic and innovative leaders in Africa to chart ways forward and build back better from the current economic challenges specifically aggravated by the Covid pandemic.

Oluwasegun (Segun) Afolaranmi

MA Immunology | University of Oxford | Charity, Health and Medicine

Segun grew up in Lagos, Nigeria. He grew up in a traditional Nigerian family setting, as the youngest member of a large, extended family, but Segun spent most of his time with his mother and older sibling as a boy. Both his parents were petty traders, and Segun was the first in the family to attend university or study abroad.

Throughout school, Segun maintained an active extracurricular life and enjoyed participating in frequent public speaking competitions. He was so good at public speaking that during primary school, Segun was convinced that he would go on to become a lawyer. However, as school progressed, Segun discovered that he was more interested in Biology, and decided to pursue a career in medicine. Motivated by a desire to help people and use his love for science, Segun applied himself to his studies and completed school with top grades. He finished as best graduating student in his high school, securing all distinctions, as well as the best result in all Federal schools in the southwest Nigeria region.

Following high school, Segun opted to take A Levels in Biology, Physics and Chemistry at Ascending College, attaining all A*s, before starting his Bachelor of Medicine at the University of Ibadan. He graduated from medical school in 2019, achieving the top overall grade out of 110 students, and securing over 30 academic and leadership awards.

Beyond academics, Segun has an outstanding track record of leadership and social development. He is co-founder of The Ganglion Initiative, a youth-focused organization that seeks to improve access to quality education in Nigeria. Seeing that many of his younger colleagues were either not confident enough to apply to higher education programmes, or lacked sufficient guidance to do so, Segun and his co-founders decided to create something that addressed this shortage of careers counsellors and university admission services among public secondary schools in Nigeria. Founded in July 2017, the Ganglion Initiative has since secured NGO status and now operates in over 30 public schools. Through its volunteers, located across five states, the organisation provides career guidance, mentorship, and scholarship opportunities to approximately 8,000 students via workshops and talks. Volunteers come from major universities in every state: Ibadan, Osun, Ekiti, Edo and Lagos. Currently, they are working on a careers book and app to be launched later in 2021. The app is in its initial testing phase.





Segun co-organized the 2018 Federation of African Medical Students Association (FAMSA) General Assembly, where he served as the Vice-Chairperson. After attending the first African World Healthcare Symposium in Rwanda, Segun and his friends felt inspired to act against some of the region's biggest healthcare challenges. Particularly alarming was the disproportionate rate of death from treatable cancers across African countries, and the extent to which African healthcare systems were dependent upon external help. Recognising the need for further conversation on these issues, Segun and his team brought together 600 students and 30 speakers from across Africa and beyond to a weeklong conference. They discussed the future of African healthcare, raising and effectively managing an \$80,000 budget, and attracting the support of the WHO, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Johnson and Johnson.

Following medical school, Segun was awarded a Clarendon scholarship for his current Masters studies at the University of Oxford, and in March 2021 he was named a Gates-Cambridge Scholar-Elect. His graduate research at both Oxford and Cambridge will find better ways to use the immune system to fight cancer, a challenging disease that disproportionately impacts Africans. Ultimately, Segun hopes to contribute to leading efforts aimed at expanding access to transformative cancer therapies in Africa, and alleviate the unacceptable disparities currently observed. He will begin a PhD at Cambridge in Cancer Immunology in October 2021.

Elisha Ngetich

DPhil (PhD) in Surgical Sciences | University of Oxford | Medical Research, Education and Social Entrepreneurship

Elisha Ngetich is a doctor, global health specialist and Rhodes scholar currently pursuing his PhD in Surgical Sciences at the University of Oxford.

Elisha grew up in a tiny village on the outskirts of rural Kericho, Kenya, where he lived with his parents and four siblings. Four years later, his parent's separation resulted in Elisha and his siblings moving in with his mother, who managed to secure a casual job working on a tea plantation in Kericho. Elisha enjoyed school, but finances were hard owing to his mother's meagre salary, and the children were often sent home for failing to pay their school fees.



Despite his precarious financial situation, Elisha was a conscientious student and managed to secure a place at Kericho Boys' High School. From there, Elisha went on to study hard and was the first in the school to place in the top 15 students nationally after completing his final year exams. This was out of more than 400,000 students across Kenya. Achieving such a high result provided Elisha with the opportunity to work in a bank for two years before starting medical school at the University of Nairobi in 2011. Elisha explains that the move to pursue Medicine was driven by a desire to achieve job security, having witnessed the struggles his mother had faced growing up.

During his undergraduate medical studies, Elisha became acutely aware of the challenges of the Kenyan healthcare system. This became particularly apparent while he was on placement in smaller, more remote hospitals, where he witnessed patients sharing beds and others sleeping on the floor due to a lack of adequate resources.

After completing medical school in 2016, Elisha began work with the Ministry of Health as a junior doctor in the surgical unit of Nakuru General Provincial Hospital. Over the course of his 36-hour shifts, Elisha became all too familiar with the problems of the Kenyan healthcare system again and was determined to make a change. Turning his efforts to health policy and research in a bid to improve clinical outcomes across the country, Elisha applied for the Rhodes scholarship at the University of Oxford. He went on to secure his place as one of just two students selected nationally in 2018.

In 2019, Elisha, along with a group of friends, co-founded the Integrated Cancer Research Foundation (ICRF) Kenya, an organisation that seeks to reduce the burden of cancer and improve its management through evidence-based approaches. Drawing on their undergraduate experiences, Elisha and his peers set up the organisation in recognition of the fact that too many Kenyans were coming to the doctor with advanced stage cancer where little treatment could be offered. Serving as a director and board member of the clinical division, Elisha works with a team of about 20 other experts (PhD and Masters holders) to organise collaboration with universities and other organisations in the country to create awareness and conduct cancer research. To date, they have organised more than 30 outreach visits to a total of 3000 people in various parts of Nairobi, focusing especially on marginalised areas. As Clinical Director, Elisha's main responsibility involves liaising with local hospitals to ensure patients follow up with them once care has been delivered.



remotely. By refining this follow up mechanism, Elisha and the team have more accurately been able to assess their impact on remote communities following medical outreach visits.

Elisha is also the co-founder of Iluu, a social impact organisation aimed at addressing gender inequalities and improving access to education in marginalised communities in east Africa. Iluu works to provide mentorship to girls across Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, organise regional exchange programmes and support students through scholarships. There are currently more than 10,000 students across 20 high schools involved in the programme, and Elisha and his co-founder have personally sponsored five girls to a total of £5,000 while looking to secure funding. Through this programme, Elisha hopes to provide students with the opportunity to interact with other like-minded peers, gain travel experience and develop the life skills required to become self-sufficient.

Elisha currently serves as the President of Oxford University Africa Society, a position where he represents over 400 African students and thousands of alumni at the University of Oxford. This position has given him the opportunity to champion for increased access and representation of African students at the University of Oxford. He also sits on various Oxford University student boards, including the Oxford Foundry's Student Advisory Board, where he helps co-create entrepreneurial initiatives such as the Future Leaders Entrepreneurship Programme across the university and beyond. He is also the author of 'The Bold Dream: Transcending the Impossible', published in January 2021 by New Generation Publishing. In this book, he reflects on his academic and professional life, having climbed up the academic ladder from a rural primary school to the University of Oxford as a Rhodes scholar. With this book, Elisha's hope is to inspire younger generations from similar backgrounds that it is possible to achieve whatever you set your mind to. He has sold more than 2,000 copies to date.

Contributions

Be Mindful of Life's Turning Points: A Strange Thing Happened on My Way to a Career in Neurosurgery

Here is the typical academic and career trajectory of the classic Kenyan “golden girl”: attendance at a top-tier primary school; entry into one of the leading “national high schools”; and then entry into the incredibly competitive medical school. Beyond medical school would be the Eldorado of either neurosurgery, or cardiology – the ultimate twin peaks of aspiration for any young Kenyan who had been judged as “exceptionally promising” from their youngest days.

Having joined medical school, I was looking forward to changing the lives of my patients – and then something strange happened – even though, oddly enough, at that time I had no idea that I had suddenly arrived at a fundamental turning point in my life.

On a perfectly ordinary morning at med-school, and when least expected, I met a patient whose story was to haunt my imagination for months and years, and who indeed still haunts me to this very day: Joyce.

I met her in my fourth year of medical school when she came in for her first consultation at the teaching-referral hospital. And even without closing my eyes, I can still see her now.

Joyce was dressed in a long, faded skirt that had obviously seen more than its fair share of days with a rather bulky, colourful, sweater, with imitation leather buttons, which seemed unnecessary for a rather warm morning. As she walked into the room, she appeared anxious and extremely ill at ease. Even as she sat down, you could see the reservation in her eyes, and I wondered if the slight stench that I detected had anything to do with it. And as she slowly started telling her story, she crossed her arms across her chest as if trying to conceal what appeared to be a case of macromastia (abnormally enlarged breast tissue). But the more she spoke of her symptoms the more I was convinced that it was something more sinister. This was confirmed when we examined her.

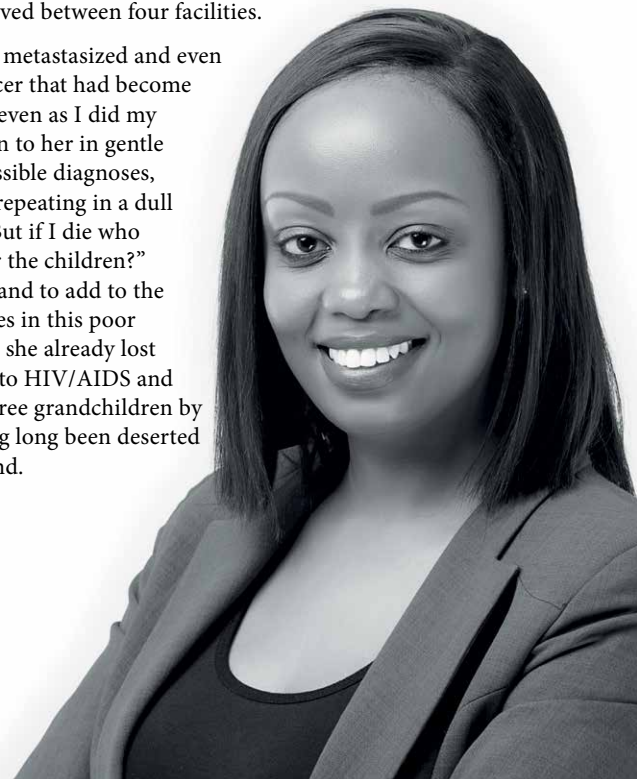
Lying on the examination couch, she slowly unbuttoned her sweater and we soon discovered that she had several articles of clothing and with each soaked layer the stench grew stronger until she finally revealed what appeared to be a large ulcerating

mass growing from her left breast. It was oozing and there were evident skin changes even on the other breast. It wasn't macromastia. It was late-stage breast cancer.

I asked her: “Did no one ever mention to you that if you felt a lump on your breast you should go for investigations?” No. “Did you know that there are physical signs you can look for to warn you that a lump is probably malignant?” No.

I was to learn that she was completely unaware, and it was only when the intensity of the pain increased that she sought medical intervention and even then, she had spent several weeks applying several different herbal remedies from local healers, before seeking care in the nearest health centre. They had then referred her to the nearby town and before she got to us, had moved between four facilities.

The mass had metastasized and even formed an ulcer that had become infected. But even as I did my best to explain to her in gentle words the possible diagnoses, she just kept repeating in a dull monotone, “But if I die who will look after the children?” Apparently – and to add to the many tragedies in this poor woman's life - she already lost her daughter to HIV/AIDS and raising her three grandchildren by herself, having long been deserted by her husband.



Unfortunately, we couldn't give her a definite answer until we carried out investigations. We gave her an appointment for the next week. She seemed to consider her fate as there was a long pause before she finally looked up, said 'Thank you' and slowly stood up to leave. There were tears brimming in her eyes and right before she opened the door, she took a deep breath, and then walked out.

My eyes were not that dry either.

I never saw Joyce again. She simply never did come back to us at the referral hospital.

As I received the Rare Rising Stars 2020 award, ranking among the most outstanding Black students in the UK, the question came up, "What drives me?"

In this past year, as the world battled with the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us found ourselves reviewing, restructuring, and recalibrating our lives, professional and private.

I found myself thinking of the different turning points in my life. Joyce was one such point as she catalysed the shift from being a medical doctor to being a healthcare entrepreneur. Joyce, and the challenges she and others face when accessing healthcare in sub-Saharan Africa, drove me to the realisation that I belong in impact, tackling some of the world's wicked problems.

This saw me become co-founder and CEO of Checkups Medical Centre, a network of rapid outpatient diagnostics and treatment clinics that is set to unlock a 1-billion-dollar market, targeting blue collar workers in the fast-growing segments of the economy.

Therefore, when the team at Rare Recruitment reached out one year following the award and asked, "Would you like to share with us?" I took quite some time in responding as I reflected on my journey so far.

I had exited my company, Checkups Medical Centre, and another strange thing had happened, only this time, it was as I was completing my MBA as a Skoll Entrepreneurship Scholar at Oxford University's Said Business School.

The themes that were resounding in my career had been entrepreneurship, innovation, women, and health. I was yet on another mission.

I now work with several healthcare companies including Eden Healthcare, MedBoda and DonkeyWorks. Furthermore, based on my own struggles as an entrepreneur, I seek to support gender equality initiatives and this has seen me join a team raising a gender lens fund, Lens Africa Ventures, focused on East Africa.

So, what would I like to share?

The past year has not been easy for many of us. But the journey we must each walk is rarely paved. Therefore, we must find within ourselves, the strength to rise when we fall, to speak even when numb and to listen despite the noise. In your individual journeys, I hope that when you come to the fork on the road, you have the courage to take the right turn – even if it's down the road less travelled.

Dr Diana Wangari Gitau

Dr Diana Wangari Gitau is a Skoll Entrepreneurship Scholar and MBA graduate from the University of Oxford. She is currently Principal at Lens Africa Ventures and Group CEO at Eden Healthcare Group. Her work focuses on issues pertaining to women, female entrepreneurs and health. She was No. 1 Rare Rising Star in 2020.

Against all Odds

A Visual Piece by Horcelie Sinda Wa Mbongo

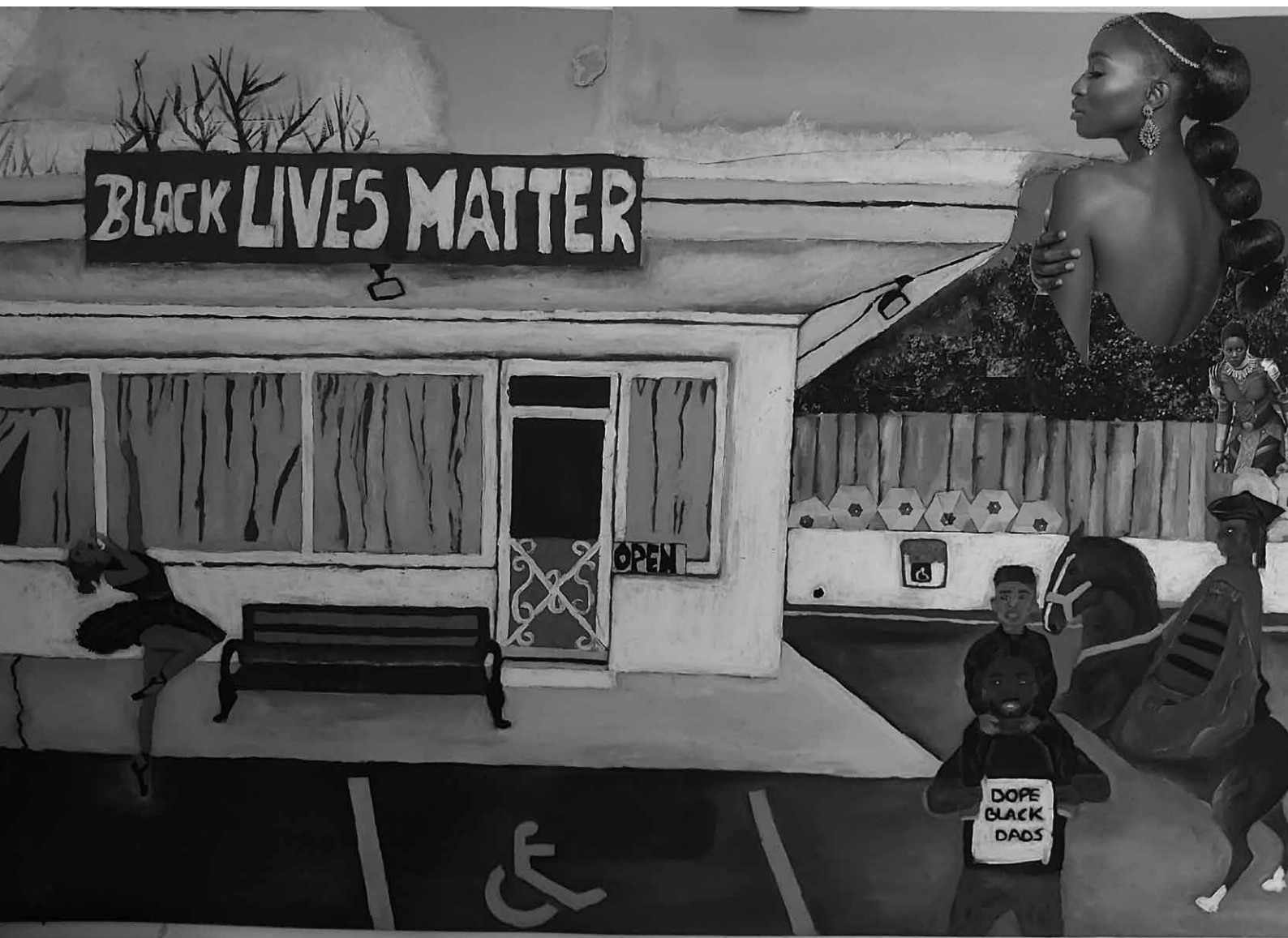
Horcelie Sinda Wa Mbongo
Oil on Paper, Collage
75.5 cm × 51.5 cm
2021

Horcelie Sinda Wa Mbongo is a Sotheby's Institute MA graduate in Contemporary Art, with a BA at Chelsea College of Art. She is an artist, writer, activist and founder of charity Lobiko. Her work explores themes of identity, spirituality and Christianity. Using photography, performance



and various other mixed media, she incorporates personal and cultural themes of the self, whilst examining the spiritual meaning of God.

She is currently working part-time as a project manager at Congo Biennale.



Catching up with Dr Toluwalase Awoyemi



When I got the email from Bez Adeosun that I had been nominated to the Rare Rising Stars by Dr Garang, one of the previous award recipients, my heart almost jumped out of my mouth. I had been in the UK for just about two years, and 2020 had been particularly hectic, particularly with the pandemic in its full swing. So naturally, I was in disbelief about it. I fondly remember being interviewed by Bez, telling my story, which in my opinion, is one of the most challenging tasks to do. The conversation went for more than an hour as I spoke in the small seminar room at my department. I started to properly appreciate the impact of my experiences. They have moulded and shaped me and my aspirations. After then, days turned to weeks and weeks to months. I didn't know what to expect until I got another email stating I had made the top ten. At that time, the position did not matter; making up the list was good enough for me.

A week after that, I was told I had made the top four and should ensure I was available to give a speech remotely on the said date of the event. This elevated my mood the whole week, especially with the laboratory being shut due to COVID 19 and things appearing gloomy. On the day of the award, they called number four. It wasn't me. Then I thought, maybe number three, and they called number three, and it still wasn't me. Because I was distracted for some minutes, I thought, 'oh wow! I must have been part of five to ten. I must have missed out on my name. Perhaps they mispronounced my name, which is, unfortunately, becoming a familiar theme.' Then I heard my name being called second, I lost it, I didn't know what to say. I have never felt happier to be second in my life and to have lost the first position to such a phenomenal Black woman who would make a first in any list.

Since that moment, the world has been spinning round in circles, and life has happened to me pleasantly. Shortly after that, I was named one of the top 35 most inspiring youth under 35 in Africa by Africa 35.35 awards. I was a finalist for Social entrepreneur of the year. I was named as one of the top 159 inspiring youths in Africa by the Africa Youth Awards. I also got featured in Oxford 100 BHM as one of the 100 innovators, creators, and thinkers who have contributed to Oxford's prestige in celebrating Black History Month. After that, I got several academic grants, scholarships, and studentships. The cherry on the cake was being named PhD student of the year in the United Kingdom. These awards and laurels make me immensely grateful to God, family, supervisors, friends, collaborators, colleagues, mentors, mentees, and members of my department.

My time in Oxford and perhaps the UK is coming to an end shortly. Still, I am excited about the future, the promises and uncertainties that go with it. I would like foremost to return to Nigeria and explore the country for a while. All things being equal, I want to stay in a rural town in Nigeria that is underserved health and education-wise and offer my medical expertise. After then, I intend to commence my speciality training in medicine in a program I perceive to be a good fit for my ideas and ambitions. I am highly interested in contributing to the medical field, academically and clinically, especially in areas that affect women and unborn children.

Finally, I am grateful to the Rare Rising Stars team for recognising and celebrating Black excellence in the UK and across the world.

Dr Toluwalase Awoyemi

Dr Toluwalase Awoyemi graduated with a distinction from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, and is currently working in the Nuffield Department of Women's and Reproductive Health, University of Oxford. His work focuses on issues pertaining to medical conditions that affect pregnant women and newborn babies like preeclampsia and preterm birth. He is a 2020 Rare Rising Star.

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 MBE

Global COO, Shared Services and Banking Operations, Morgan Stanley

Sophie is Global COO of Shared Services and Banking Operations at Morgan Stanley. Prior to that, she was EMEA COO 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 £13 billion. Before that, Sophie was a Senior Associate at global firm Baker McKenzie, advising clients such as Nike, The Body Shop and Alliance Boots.

As a campaigner for inclusion and diversity, Sophie is a Strategic Advisor to Morgan Stanley's African and Caribbean Business Alliance, Head of Race Equity Strategy for the 30% Club and a member of The Executive Leadership Council (ELC). As an entrepreneur, she is Chair and Executive Founder of the Black British Business Awards and Chair and Chief Strategist of The Network of Networks. Sophie is a recipient of many industry awards and has been featured in the *Financial Times*, *Sunday Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Management Today*, *HR Director* and *Brummell*. She is a Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow and has served on several philanthropic boards, including Sentebale, which was founded by Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex, to support children affected by HIV/ AIDS in Africa. In June 2021, Sophie was appointed by Her Majesty The Queen as a Member of the British Empire (MBE) for services to diversity in business.



Tia Angela Counts

As Chief Diversity Officer for MSCI Inc., Tia combines her financial acumen with expert knowledge of government regulations to align DEI goals across the firm with business outcomes.

Prior to her current role, Tia worked for J.P. Morgan in London for nine years, leading DEI efforts for the Asset & Wealth Management business; and developing and driving a strategy for Black talent as Head of Advancing Black Pathways for the Corporate and Investment bank business globally. Formerly, Tia was a senior lawyer in JP Morgan's Legal Department, providing strategic legal counsel to the Corporate & Investment Bank. She held a variety of senior roles as a lawyer and revenue producer specializing in derivatives and has over 20 years' experience in domestic and cross border investment banking, 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. She began her legal career in 1997 as a corporate finance attorney 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 University Law School and her BA in Sociology and Spanish from the University of California at Berkeley. Originally from Los Angeles, she resides in Clapham, South London.



Jean Tomlin OBE

Jean has had a distinguished Human Resources career and is probably most widely known for the extraordinary success of the 'people' aspect of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. As Director of HR, Workforce and Accreditation, Jean was responsible for the mobilisation of 200,000 people, the UK's largest peace-time workforce. She was awarded an OBE from the International Olympic and Paralympic Committees for her outstanding contribution to the Olympic and Paralympic Movements.

Born and raised in southeast London, Jean began her career at Ford, Dagenham working in labour relations. She has worked for a number of Heritage brands, including Prudential and Marks and Spencer as Group HR Director, and is a founding member of the first online Bank, Egg PLC.

Since founding and becoming CEO of Chanzo, a Human Resources consultancy firm, Jean has continued to work alongside CEOs and stakeholders worldwide in the public, private and voluntary sector. Most recent assignments have included providing HR advisory services to the Department of Health and Social Care and advising McLaren Racing on their Diversity and Inclusion journey.

Jean was listed in the Powerlist 2015-2016 and the Green Park Top 100 BAME Business Leaders 2018. She continues to develop an extensive and diverse board portfolio, including Non-Executive Director at J Sainsbury's PLC, with current positions held at Capri Holdings Ltd (Michael Kors, Jimmy Choo & Versace) and Hakluyt & Co Ltd.

She has been a judge with Rare Rising Stars since 2012 and views her participation as one of her major achievements.



Tom Chigbo

Tom is a Senior Organiser for Citizens UK, a community alliance of faith, education and civil society groups who take action for the common good. His role involves building relationships across diverse communities, delivering leadership training and campaigning for social justice. Over the last ten 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 enact positive change within 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 three 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 BAME communities, 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 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 promoting human rights around the world.

Closing Statements

Words from Our Sponsors



University of Oxford

“Congratulations to this year’s Rising Stars, on your achievements and for being celebrated by Rare Recruitment. The last year has been testing for us all; highlighting the challenges that faces our society, but it has also highlighted the strengths, excellence, and ingenuity epitomised by your achievements.

The University of Oxford is proud to support Rare; as we look to the future with a renewed sense of optimism and determination, we are in no doubt that this year’s Rising Stars will continue to lead and inspire us all.”

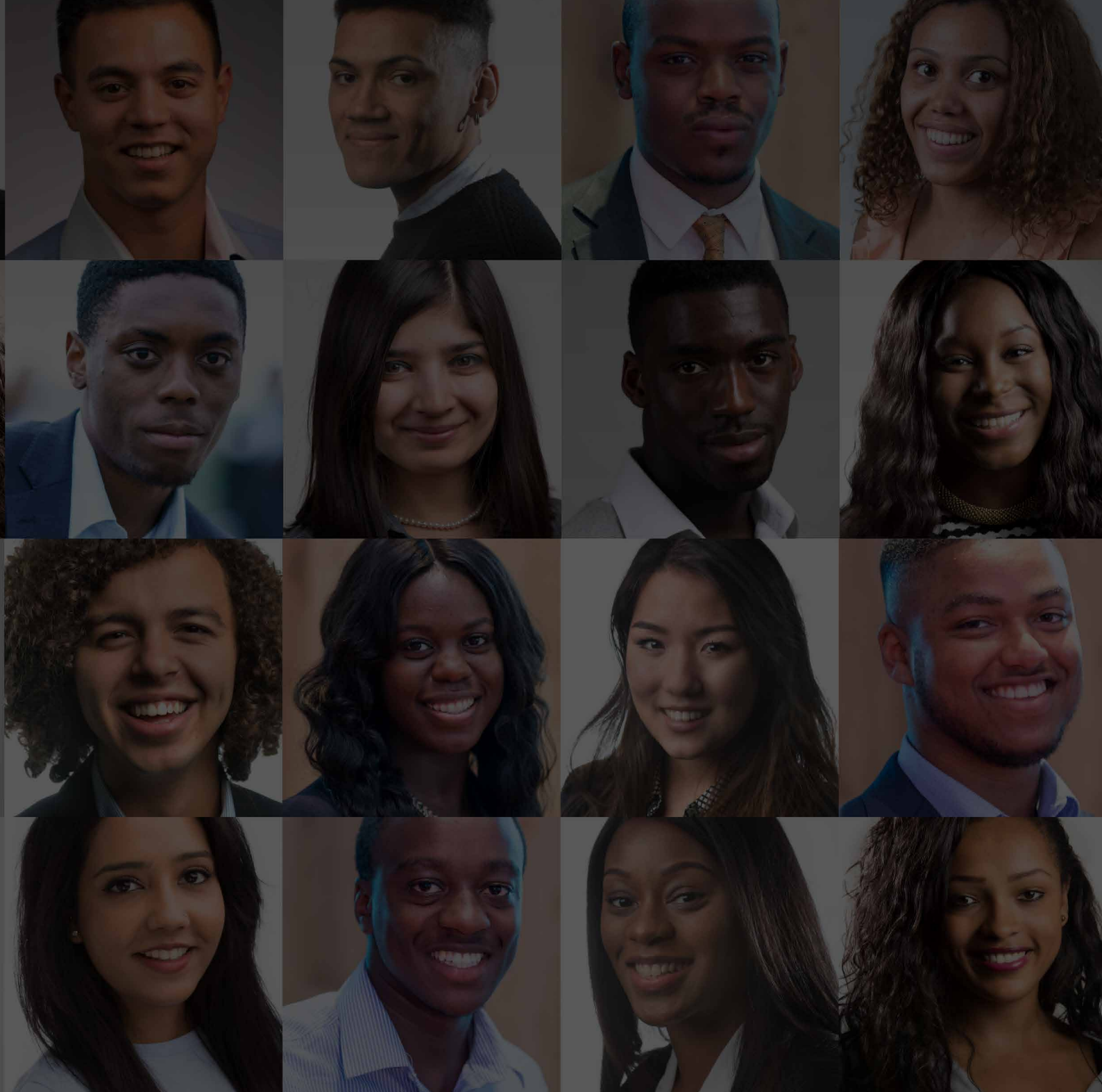
Dr Samina Khan, Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Outreach



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.”

Tom Levinson, Head of Widening Participation and Regional Collaboration, Cambridge Admissions Office



LEADERS IN DIVERSITY
GRADUATE RECRUITMENT

rare

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 Chandaoka, 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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