



Emerging Star Award Winner Imani Harris

Native Detroiter Imani Harris spent the majority of her high school career at Renaissance High as a community organizer and youth activist fighting for education justice on the city's east side. Now 23, she continues her work as an education justice organizer at 482Forward, an education organizing group in Detroit, where she manages their communications and research teams.

Imani's educational justice journey began in her sophomore year when she passionately wrote an open letter about her experiences in Detroit Public Schools, then under the control of an emergency manager. The paper was shared on social media and picked up by the local Metro Times and the national media outlet, The Huffington Post. Her outspokenness over troubles impacting Detroit students and teachers landed her before legislative committee meetings and she became a visible advocate in fighting to improve Detroit's educational system. She led local- and state-level protests, fighting for gun reform, education reform, and the right for students to be involved in every conversation that concerns them.

Using her storytelling skills to address Detroit's most vulnerable youth, she wrote letters to senators and government officials that gained national traction and enlightened the public on students' experiences. She led a storytelling event in collaboration with Chalkbeat Detroit for students to share how they have been impacted by Detroit's tumultuous education system. Her written words continued to attract national acclaim and awards.

Imani recently graduated with honors with a double major in Journalism and Black Studies from Northwestern University, where she dedicated herself to working in the campus' Black community and becoming a member and subsequent president/coordinator of a student-led organization called the Black Mentorship Program (BMP).

Today, she remains heavily involved in the improvement of the overall school system in Michigan and is invested in publicizing and fighting for equitable education for Black students. She continues to work for education justice at 482Forward, and she has also begun to dream about ways to specifically mentor and empower Black girls.

Her nominator writes: "Once Imani discovered the power of her voice, she has never stopped using it to make change. She is a powerful advocate and is excellent at making space without taking space. She has a huge passion for the youth in the city of Detroit and her life's dream revolves around making sure that Detroit youth, especially young girls, know the power of their voices."

Congratulations Imani Harris!