



The Princeton Club of Rochester

Asha Charles
Junior, Churchville-Chili High School

The ability to take leadership roles is often learned, but Asha is demonstrating a natural gift as a driving force for racial issues and education in her community. Asha's second year as a member of the group Dignity for All Students Act (DASA) put her at the helm of numerous events and activities to promote and educate the Churchville-Chili community on diversity and race relations. Serving as facilitator for the presentation of the film *I Am Not A Racist...Am I?* empowered her to prompt thoughtful discussions about racial biases with peers, families, and teachers.

“Before DASA, nobody really knew how to approach these kinds of discussions about race relations, so many of the kids and parents sent emails to the administration and DASA about how the film provoked their minds on the subject of race issues in our own community. We also got a lot of comments from students who felt that by listening to us talk about race relations and the problems that minorities in our school face, they were able to somewhat understand what they go through on a daily basis.”

Lori Orologio, Superintendent of Schools for the Churchville-Chili School District, recognizes Asha's ability to lead thought-provoking community conversations:

“Asha has displayed an intrinsic passion for making positive change in our high school. Whether it is coordinating peace circles in our elementary schools, planning assemblies for Black History Month and Day of Caring, or organizing our upcoming Roc2Change Student Summit on Race (county-wide student movement to improve race relations in Monroe County), Asha exemplifies our District Core Belief of treating others with respect, dignity and honesty.”

Asha also had an active leadership role spearheading a survey for high school students focusing on race, religion, gender identity, and culture. She says her work has helped reduce the number of racial conflicts and misunderstandings, both at school and in the community.

“I feel as if the real change starts at the base of the pyramid, which in my eyes are the youth or the kids still in elementary and middle school. They are the future.”

Asha has also received the District Board of Education “Triple C Award.” This honor is based upon her character, her efforts as a member of DASA, and the positive changes she has cultured at the high school.

“I don't like taking a back seat when it comes to race relations and activities,” says Asha. It is clear to see that, on the road to educating her community, she is certainly in the driver's seat. Keep up the great work, Asha!