



The Princeton Club of Rochester

Imani Baker
Senior, The Harley School

When seeking opportunities to “level the field” in race relations and racial issues, Imani isn’t just seizing upon them, she is creating opportunities for herself and those around her with clear passion. After more than a decade of inactivity, Imani breathed new life into the Black Student Union (BSU) at the Harley School. But she had a mission: To give largely marginalized Black and Latino students a place to find their voices, find commonality and utilize academic resources specifically for racial and ethnic students who had previously gone largely unnoticed. Through the BSU, Imani is helping students to deepen their understanding of their culture, share thoughts and advocate for true racial equality, including highlighting access to academic assistance for Black students attending college. But her BSU activism is not just for her own classmates. Imani and other members are serving as mentors to Middle School students at Harley at a time that can be crucial for a student trying to find their voice. Imani says her work is having far reaching success for students, teachers and the community:

“I am setting the standard for the school and saying we have to do better for our black students.”

Mentor and supporter, Jocie Kopfman, a teacher at Harley School, agrees. She says Imani’s advocacy is not merely introspective, but groundbreaking:

“Imani is confronting the institution. She understands that inclusion does not simply mean feeling accepted by peers and teachers, but that the institution understands the impact that marginalization has on youth and does what it takes to mitigate those often negative experiences. Imani is demanding that we revolutionize how we support marginalized groups, making Harley a space that is more inclusive on every level.”

Since invigorating the mission of the BSU, Imani has engaged students in the Urban League of Rochester, the Union for Students of Color and the Roc 2 Change Summit--all aimed at advancing race relations and providing a strong network of support for the school and community. Kopfman says Imani has a deep understanding of her role:

“Her actions show that she is empathetic and someone who seeks creative action within a system, not simply within herself.”

Keep up your outstanding work, Imani, and congratulations!