

THE PRINCETON PRIZE IN RACE RELATIONS NEWS

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Boston Public School Student Wins Princeton Prize in Race Relations

BOSTON, MA. – Emily R. Chang, a Boston Public Schools student at the Boston Latin School, has been awarded the 2011 Princeton Prize in Race Relations for her efforts to improve race relations in her school and community. Ms. Chang will receive the Princeton Prize at an award ceremony on May 11, 2011, at the Museum of Science, and will be honored by a keynote presentation by Mayor Thomas M. Menino for her work.

Inspired by the perceived need in her school to confront the issues of race and inequality, in 2009 Ms. Chang founded the Youth Diversity Alliance (YDA), an organization that provides leadership opportunities for students to effect positive change in the areas of race relations, diversity and social justice.

YDA has had a meaningful and tangible impact on promoting positive race relations in the Greater Boston area. It has sponsored five workshops for students to discuss matters of race in an open and honest forum. YDA also launched a program called Diversity Exchange, which pairs up racially-heterogeneous students to learn more about each others' backgrounds and to discuss race issues from a personal perspective. Through these programs the YDA has engaged more than 120 participants from seven area high schools and three universities. Supporting organizations include Genzyme Corporation, the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, and the Boston Police Department.

The five YDA workshops on race, held over the course of the school year, allow participants to discuss racially and culturally charged issues in a constructive way. Participants are asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about race anonymously prior to discussion. These comments then become the basis for honest and challenging student discussions, with a goal of promoting learning and personal growth.

The Diversity Exchange pairs students of different races together in order to learn more about each others' cultural experiences and backgrounds over a three-week period. The program begins with a potluck dinner, to which students and parents are invited, and an open discussion about the role of race in today's society as it affects the lives of the participants. Over the course of the three weeks, participating students spend time visiting each others' homes, cooking with one another, and generally being exposed to a different culture. The program ends with a one-day retreat at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center, where all participants share their experiences.

Ms. Chang has also held a leadership role with the Boston Center for Community Justice (BCCJ) since October, 2009. In her capacity as the BCCJ Youth Programs Assistant, she raised \$1500 in scholarships for low-income students to participate in the BCCJ Leadership Initiative (InIt) Program, which offers leadership training to students on topics of racism, diversity and social justice. She also played a significant role in interviewing applicants for the 2010-2011 InIt Program.

"I am astounded at the quality of work that she and the membership [of YDA] produce," said Lucia Rodriguez Sweeney, a Spanish teacher at the Boston Latin High School who nominated Ms. Chang for the Prize. "Emily perceived the need in her school for a forum and outlet that dares to ask the tough questions around race and inequality."

The Princeton Prize Committee will also award Certificates of Accomplishment to the following students:

Janet Mathieson, a senior at Middlesex School in Concord, has worked in a variety of ways to raise fellow students' awareness of race and gender issues. Janet produced and directed "The Vagina Monologues", a play which addresses themes of gender, race relations and violence against women. Ticket sales from the performance went to support victims of sexual violence in Haiti. In her capacity as Diversity Officer, Janet has worked to raise awareness by overseeing workshops, speaking to students, and running programs at school fairs. Viewed as a student leader and as an articulate speaker, Janet was the keynote speaker at the school's Diversity day, the first time a student has ever held that role. Other efforts include inviting activist Michelle Contreras to speak to the school about issues of gender and racial inequality, and developing an independent studies course on African-American female authors.

Sarah Doyle, a senior at Andover High School, teaches Irish step dancing in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Inspired by a great partnership teaching a student of Latino descent how to step dance, Sarah organized an Irish step-dancing dance class for fifteen Latino girls and choreographed a dance for them to perform in the Lawrence Saint Patrick's Day Parade. The girls dance routine won second prize at the parade, and was such a success that she has gone on to teach an on-going class for Latino girls and to continue to enter her students in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade. According to Sarah, the class has allowed the girls to celebrate a culture different from theirs, and promoted cross-cultural understanding in a public and celebratory way. "The girls who I teach would never have been exposed to Irish Step dancing ...my hope is that our ability to cross a cultural bridge will inspire others to do so."

Lina Nguyen, a junior at Burncoat High School, organized two events to raise awareness about the experience of undocumented students and their struggles to gain equality and adequate education. The first event, titled "Coming Out", took place at the Worcester Public Library and featured a panel of students sharing personal stories. Lina also co-produced a workshop at the Boston Asian American Student Intercollegiate Conference (BAASIC), which took place in Cambridge, to discuss the rights of young undocumented immigrants of Asian descent. Lina is committed to bringing issues of undocumented

students to light, particularly in the Asian community. “We push to teach understanding that the current immigrant issues today are not just a Latino issue but an issue that hurts Asians as well.” said Lina. “If Asians can be convinced to see the issue in solidarity with Latinos and other people of color then we can gain strength in numbers.”

Founded in 2003 in the Boston metropolitan and Washington, D.C. areas by Princeton University alums, the Princeton Prize in Race Relations program recognizes high school students for their efforts to improve race relations in their schools and communities. During the 2010-11 school year, the Princeton Prize awards program was available to students attending school in 23 metropolitan areas. These locations are: Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Dallas, Denver, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, Memphis, Miami, Nashville, New York City, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Princeton, Rochester, St. Louis, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. metropolitan areas, Seattle/Western Washington State, Northern New Jersey and the state of Connecticut.

In coming years, Princeton University plans to extend the Princeton Prize to other communities around the country, with the ultimate goal of establishing the Princeton Prize program in all 50 states.

Anyone interested in covering the Princeton Prize award ceremony on May 11, 2011, at the Museum of Science can contact Mr. Jim Parmentier of the Boston Prize Committee at 207-721-8428 or jparmen@aol.com, or Mr. Lee McGuire, BPS Chief Communications Officer at 617-635-9265, or the Museum of Science Press Department at (617) 723-2500.