



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**ERASE Racism Announces Four Winners of its “Raise Your Voice” Student Essay Contest,
With Each Receiving a \$500 College Scholarship**

**The Winners are High School Seniors from Lynbrook High School, Glen Cove High School, and
Malverne High School (Which Produced Two of the Winners)**

Syosset, NY – June 14, 2022 – Elaine Gross, President of ERASE Racism, announced today the four winners of ERASE Racism’s 2022 “Raise Your Voice” student essay contest for Long Island high school seniors. The essay contest focused on discussing the importance of teaching students about the impact of racism throughout U.S. history. Each winner received a \$500 college scholarship at ERASE Racism’s Annual Benefit on Wednesday, June 8. The scholarships were made possible by the generous support of SCOPE Educational Services in Smithtown.

The four winners – along with brief excerpts from their essays – are as follows:

- Asa Freeman, Lynbrook High School in Lynbrook, NY

“As you can imagine, being one of the few black men in a predominantly white community had its share of challenges. “Jokingly” being sent pictures of the Ku Klux Klan or being told I’m “not like the rest of them” simply because I don’t fit the stereotypes imposed on black men by the media are common experiences that I’ve faced growing up on the south shore of Long Island, yet I reflect on these experiences with gratitude. They’ve given me the strength to start the Student Diversity Council — a student-led group committed to promoting diversity, inclusion, and most importantly, understanding.”

- Sofia Garcia, Glen Cove High School in Glen Cove, NY

“Oftentimes we are taught the highlight reel of history. We only learn of the “good” and gloss over the “bad”. We find that we only hear from the victors and not from the ones who have suffered. Racism should not be something we ignore in our history, but instead something we acknowledge. I plan on becoming a history teacher in future. I want my students to learn the entirety of our country's history. Sadly not everyone believes in *the whole story*.”

- Kayla George, Malverne High School in Malverne, NY

“There have been many situations where students of color, especially black students, were told to cut or change their hair to fit the school's standards. There were students like DeAndre Arnold, who were told he would not be able to attend prom or walk for graduation due to the length of his dreadlocks. There were students like Asia Simo, who were kicked off of her school's cheer team because her hair did not match the standards for the team. Even more unknown names have cut or damaged their hair to conform to their school's expectations. These instances set the belief that thick and coarse, especially seen mainly amongst black students, is unacceptable in a place of education. They create the narrative that students will not be accepted for who they are because of their race or background, no matter how hard they work.”

- Kareena Sukhnanan, Malverne High School in Malverne, NY

“Lindner Place, the street name of our primary school where hundreds of children including I once walked down daily, is named after Paul Lindner, who was a *prominent* Ku Klux Klan leader on Long Island, igniting various acts of hate, racism, and violence. He *initiated* the burning of minority-orphanages, *led* hateful marches with thousands of attendees, and cross burnings *across* my own peers' homes. In *utter* disbelief, determined to instill change, my friends and I created a documentary on the history of racism within the Malverne community and schools, exposing the chilling truth during our research journey. I prepared a speech and documentary that I presented at a Malverne Village Hall meeting, school speak-out, and to the local NAACP Lakeview Branch attempting to convince the Malverne Town Board to change the name through my own voice, viewpoint, and activism. As of April 2022, we erased hate as the Malverne Board members voted unanimously to eradicate the street name. As senior year flies by, I realize education grew me a voice to accelerate change.”

The winning essays are available [here](#).