

Reniya Dinkins

2014 Scholarship Recipient



Reniya Dinkins is a scholar, mentor and leader, with a remarkable journey that is just beginning. While she was senior at Benjamin Banneker Academy High School in 2014, she was awarded the David M. Rubenstein/Economic Club of Washington Scholarship to help fund her undergraduate studies at Columbia University in New York, NY.

During high school, she was an active member of the District of Columbia Youth Advisory Council, a body of 32 students representing Ward 7. While on the Council, she advocated for fellow DC youth, by collaborating with neighborhood and youth organizations to implement policies and respond to legislation. Reniya excelled as a Council member, which led her to become the Chair of the Youth Advisory Council. This position sparked her interests in “how change can be created through policy, and the intricacies of systems of power.”

Her experience with the District of Columbia Youth Advisory Council was a key driver in her desire to pursue a double major in sociology and political Science. She decided to combine these two majors to examine the effects of policy on personal relations. “I think we experience both the separation and integration of policy in our daily lives, and that’s something I’m interested in acknowledging.” Her academic studies were quickly put to practical use with a series of valuable internships.

During the summer after freshman year, Reniya interned with the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. This internship provided her with the opportunity to engage with social issues on a national level. On the behalf of the commission, Reniya lobbied for legislative changes to better secure the civil rights of protesters. She also challenged black women to unite and combat their exclusion from economic policy discussions, and create their own strategies promoting economic stability and mobility in their families, by writing a piece titled “Why Black Working Women Matter.” Notably, Reniya conducted research regarding cases of human and civil rights infringements, and planned a panel discussion on a prominent case.

During her sophomore year of college, Reniya was accepted to the Economic Club/Urban Alliance Summer Internship program where she was placed with Running Start, a nonprofit organization that strives to train women to engage and excel in politics on the local and global stage. While there, she jumped right in to lead professional development workshops, and organized the annual Young Women’s Political Leadership Conference--a week long program which provides 60 high school girls nationwide with a trip to the White House, one-on-one meetings with members of Congress, and intensive training program on how and why to run for office. “I love mentoring young women. A lot of the women I work with are about to start college and enter the ‘real world.’ They’re understandably nervous because it can feel like there’s so much going on and you’re out of control.”

Economic Club Scholar Spotlight



*Full-circle moment: Reniya with
Economic Club/Urban Alliance intern
Emani Johnson in summer 2018*

In 2018, Reniya graduated from Columbia with a Bachelor's degree in political science and sociology. She accepted an offer to join the team at Running Start, which had actively recruited her to help expand its programming. Since she believes a great deal in the organization's mission, and enjoyed her time while interning there, Reniya started out as the internship program coordinator for Running Start. Over the summer, she managed 28 interns, oversaw several intern related projects, and managed communications between Running Start and partner internship programs, including the Economic Club/Urban Alliance Internship Program. She also created programming and activities centered on professional development, skill-building, and leadership training. More recently,

Reniya is a Research Assistant for The Brookings Institute's Metropolitan Policy program, where she assists the director with research and external engagements focused on inclusive economic development in U.S. cities and metropolitan areas.

Reniya continues to stay engaged with the Economic Club, and recently became an Alumni Mentor to a 2018 freshman scholar. Reniya expressed that she's "not done with school just yet!" After considering a career in law, she plans instead to pursue a PhD, focusing on interdisciplinary studies that integrate sociology and political science. By becoming a professor and researcher, Reniya hopes to continue to expand opportunities for leadership and access to political participation for young people from all backgrounds.