

: **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People**  
**Westchester Region ACT-SO Coalition**



Afro-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics  
*today's students...tomorrow's leaders*

PRESS RELEASE

1 of 3pp

9/21/22

For immediate release  
914 391-5435

**Westchester Region NAACP ACT-SO Regional Gold Medalists**  
**Compete at the 45th NAACP ACT-SO National Competition**

I\*\*\*\*\*

During the spring of 2022, thirty industrious high school students participated in the Westchester Region NAACP ACT-SO Regional Competition. Despite the continued COVID 19 restrictions that prevented them to compete in person, the students demonstrated their skillful talents on video via a zoom communications event platform. Of the thirty participates, eight students received gold medals qualifying them to compete at the 45th National NAACP ACT-SO Competition. The competition took place July 14th through the 17th of this year in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The Westchester Region ACT-SO gold medalists displayed mastery of their competitive skills, alongside 500 other students from across the country.

The eight gold medalists were:

**Anna Mkandawire – STEM (spec. Earth and Space Science) – Senior, Ossining High School - University of Virginia (September 2022)**

**Aryanna Luesma-Hoover – DRAWING – Senior, Alexander Hamilton High School**

**Janelle Espada – SHORT STORY – Senior, Denzel Washington School of the Arts - SUNY, Albany (September 2022)**

**Mariam Saidykahn – MUSIC VOCAL CONTEMPORARY – Senior, Denzel Washington School of the Arts - Norfolk State University, Norfolk, VA (September 2022)**

**Brice Buchanan – MUSIC COMPOSITION – Senior, Denzel Washington School of the Arts**

**Naysa Boswell – DRAMATICS - Senior, Denzel Washington School of the Arts. - A&T University, Greensboro, NC, (spring of 2023).**

**Spencer Augustine-DANCE - Senior, Denzel Washington School of the Arts. Norfolk State University in the fall.**

**Isaiah Dempson – ORIGINAL ESSAY – Senior, Port Chester High School. Alfred State College,(September of 2022).**

**Ilana Rahim-Braden - ORIGINAL ESSAY - Sophomore, Brooklyn Technical High School.**

Standing in lieu of gold medalist Isaiah Dempson, who was unable to attend the competition, Original Essay's silver medalist, Ilana Rahim-Braden competed in his place.

The Westchester Region ACT-SO Coalition is proud to announce the three students of the national participants who were awarded medals in their respective categories. Congratulations to Anna Mkandawire who received a gold medal in STEM, receiving a \$2,000 monetary award, Naysa Boswell, a bronze medal in Dramatics, receiving a \$1,000 monetary award and Spencer Augustine, a bronze medal receiving a \$1,000 monetary award. In addition to their monetary awards, all three of the medalists will also receive tech prizes that will consist of an iPad, AirPods and an Oculus Virtual Reality System.

The Westchester Region is also delighted to announce that this year, Lancôme Cosmetics USA, partnered with the NAACP and ACT-SO to grant 40 scholarships to the next generation of women with their "Write Her Future Scholarship Fund." The fund is designed to empower female students of color through literacy and education as well as mentoring and entrepreneurship opportunities.

We are delighted to announce that Anna Mkandawire, STEM gold medalist was one of the forty participants who will receive a \$10,000.00 scholarship from the

esteemed cosmetic organization. The scholarships were presented to the forty winners by Lancôme's Ambassadors, Oscar award-winning actress and published author Lupita Nyong'o on the evening of ACT-SO's National Competition Awards Ceremony.

The Westchester Region NAACP ACT-SO Enrichment Program continues their long tradition of significant positive youth development by engaging and empowering students who proudly represent Westchester County by demonstrating their talents with dedication, passion and pride. Congratulations to all of the students who participated this year .

*ACT-SO (**Afro**-Academic, Cultural, Technological and Scientific Olympics) was founded in 1978 by author and journalist Vernon Jarrett and adopted by the NAACP as a major youth initiative. It is a vehicle through which African-American high school youth may develop and demonstrate potential for excellence in arts and letters, scientific and artistic pursuits.*

*Questions regarding ACT-SO and **offers of assistance as mentors, judges and other roles may be directed to** Ms. Ingraham Taylor, **Chairperson**, at (914) 391-5435.*

**E N D**