

Winners of Saroj Lal Award announced

The winners of the first ever edition of the Saroj Lal Award for City of Edinburgh Schools were announced at a ceremony at the City Chambers on Tuesday.

Award judges, the family of Saroj Lal, student/teacher nominees and their families gathered there along with Council colleagues and other invited guests.

Saroj Lal was one of the first BAME women to teach in a Scottish primary school when she began her role at South Morningside Primary School in 1970. Her many successes included being at the forefront of race relations during a period of immense political and social change, delivering anti-racism training and starting the first local authority interpreting and translating service in Edinburgh. Following her death in 2020, Saroj's many achievements in equality, women's rights, education, and community work are being formally recognised.

All City of Edinburgh schools were invited to nominate pupil work relating to any aspect of equalities, in any artform. Headteachers were also invited to nominate staff, whose collaborative work around equalities has taken a creative approach and had an impact. All nominated work will be used to start building a resource bank for schools. There were nine schools who nominated, with 13 pupil/pupil group nominations and four teacher nominations submitted.

All work submitted was considered by a panel of judges, comprising Saroj Lal's son Vineet Lal, Debora Kayembe (Rector of The University of Edinburgh), Theo Ogbhemhe (teacher in Orkney who was winner of the first GTCS Saroj Lal Award), and young person, Alanah Walker.

The award categories for students were as follows:

Proud to be Me: Communicates the young person's personal expression of pride their heritage, in their own culture and/or identity.

How Prejudice Makes Me Feel: Expresses young people's feelings about any form prejudice inflicted on themselves or others.

Artivism: Art expresses their views on social justice and challenges others to change and/or act differently.

All the nominated work was celebrated at the ceremony hosted by Councillor Joan Griffiths, Education, Children and Families Convener.

The winner for the Proud to be Me category was Anum Shezad of The Royal High School.

In the How Prejudice Makes Me Feel category the winner was Freya Wilson of The Flora Stevenson Primary School.

For the Artivism category the winner was the Rights Respecting Schools Group, comprising four senior pupils from Firrhill High School namely Jess Daly, Alisha McLeod, Sara McLeod and Jane Williams.

The staff winner was Rory Murray, again of Firrhill High School, with the special Judges' Commendation going to Jane O'Thy, of Boroughmuir High School.

Councillor Joan Griffiths, Education, Children and Families Convener said: "I am incredibly proud to oversee the inaugural Saroj Lal Award for City of Edinburgh Schools as Education, Children and Families Convener. These pupils and their achievements are a testament to the rich legacy that Saroj Lal

left in her decades of pioneering work in Edinburgh and beyond. This award provides an opportunity to reflect not only on the life on a seminal and inspiring woman in Saroj Lal but an opportunity to look ahead to the future with pupils across the Capital showing their passion for equality, diversity and social justice”

Vineet Lal, son of Saroj Lal, and one of the Award judges said: “I have been blown away by the sheer creativity and depth of thought demonstrated by all those pupils and staff nominated for the inaugural Saroj Lal Award for Schools. I have been truly amazed by the variety and originality with which they have embraced the spirit of equality and diversity and captured that spirit so beautifully in their submissions. Saroj was a pioneering force in the struggle for justice and fairness for all, and I think she would have been very proud indeed that her trailblazing work in the City of Edinburgh and beyond should inspire new generations to champion those same values.”



Pic Greg Macvean 11/10/2022

Saroj Lal Award 2022 are presented at the City Chambers in
Edinburgh