

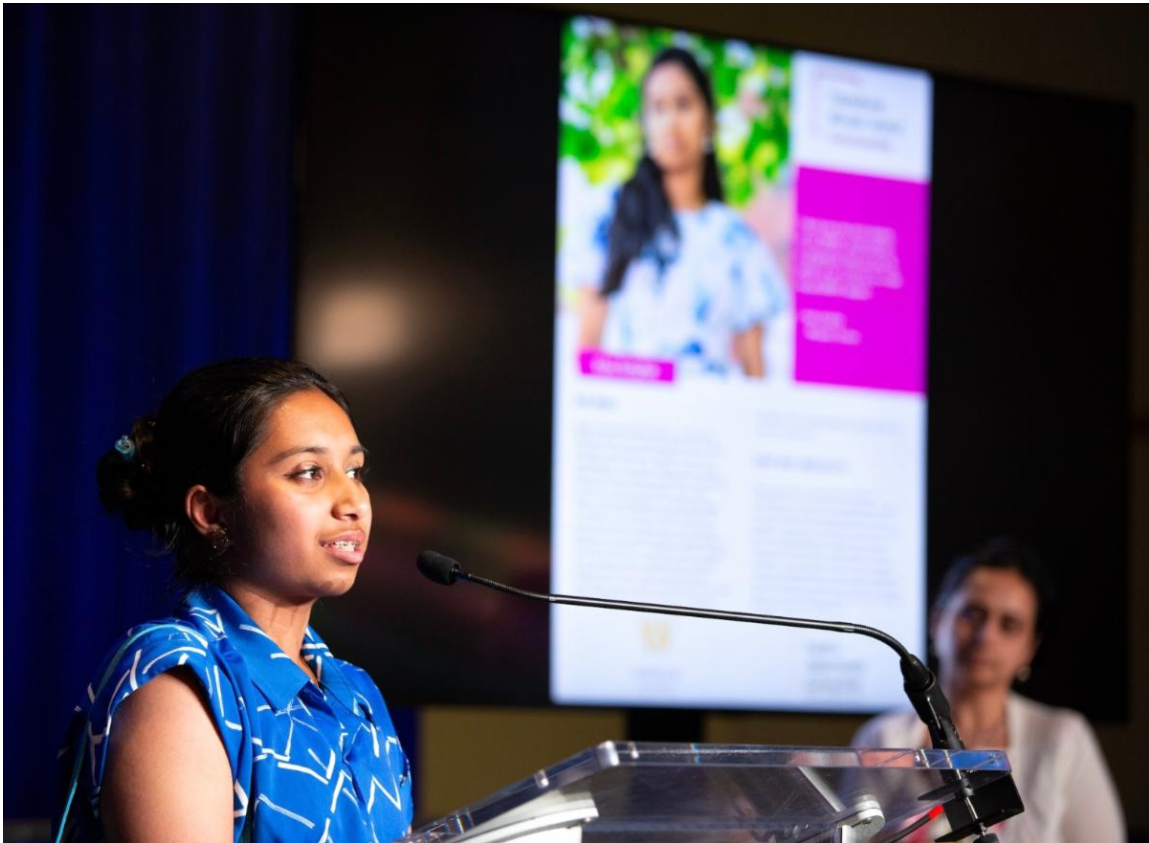
# Papitto Opportunity Connection

May 2023

## And The Winner Is...

Siya Singhal remembers how difficult it was to open her lunch box in elementary school and see it filled with delicious Indian food, but not feel confident about being able to enjoy it. She recalls feeling like an outcast at school, simply because she was surrounded by classmates who didn't look like her.

Siya envisions a world where cultural confidence is every child's superpower fueled by collective cultural awareness. She has an idea –a big idea –that can make her vision become a reality.



2023 TRIS First Place Winner: Siya Singhal. POC Photo by: Cat Laine

And it's her transformative idea focused on improving the lives of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities in Rhode Island that impressed the judges who selected Siya, a 14-year-old freshman at [The Wheeler School](#), as the first place winner of the 2023 [Transform Rhode Island Scholarship \(TRIS\)](#).

Siya will receive a \$25,000 scholarship and will have a seat at the table as [Papitto Opportunity Connection \(POC\)](#) invests \$1 million to make her idea come to life.

Her winning idea, which will result in students feeling culturally confident, was selected by a panel of judges that include RI Education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green; Executive Director of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership and adjunct professor

at Seton Hall University, Reginald Lewis; Associate Director for Translational Oncology at Brown University Legorreta Cancer Center, Sendurai Mani; and John Tarantino, POC Managing Trustee.



POC Founder Barbara Papitto, Siya Singhal, and POC Managing Trustee John Tarantino.

Tarantino made the announcement at a multicultural celebration May 16 at Farm Fresh RI. Barbara Papitto, founder, Papitto Opportunity Connection and Mariam Kaba, the first-ever TRIS winner, were on hand to present the award to Siya, whose thoughtful, transformative idea brought tears to many of the nearly 200 dignitaries, students, educators and families in attendance.

“We are proud of all the students and their creativity, but Siya was able to rise above the competition with her idea that closely aligns with POC’s mission of making connections that create real change,” said Tarantino. “We are so excited about her inspirational idea and can’t wait to help her make it become a reality.”

For the second straight year, POC asked RI high school students of color to answer one question: “If you had \$1 million how would you change Rhode Island’s communities of color?”

Nearly 200 students from 47 public, private, parochial, and charter high schools from across Rhode Island –from Woonsocket to Newport –shared personal essays, dynamic videos, and multimedia presentations.



Front row left: RI Education Commissioner Angélica Infante-Green; POC Managing Trustee, John Tarantino; POC Founder Barbara Papitto (center); Dr Sendurai Mani; and professor Reginald Lewis joined by the 2023 TRIS finalists.

Nine other student finalists were recognized and received scholarships because of their transformative ideas. They include Nicolas Upegui, North Providence High School; Eliza Vest, Moses Brown; Jayden Chagnon, The Met School; Zachary Pinto, Shea High School; Darius Ajakaie, Moses Brown; Keyla Citron, Classical High School; Adriyonna Lockhart, Rogers High School; Donovan Turner, Classical High School, and Krystallyah Ratsabout, Dr. Jorge Alvarez High School.

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## **POC Founder Joins Ranks Of The Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame**

Papitto Opportunity Connection Founder Barbara Papitto is among the nine newest members recently inducted into the Rhode Island Heritage Hall of Fame.

Established in 1965, the Hall of Fame honors individuals “whose efforts, in any line of endeavor, have added significantly to the heritage of the State of Rhode Island.” Barbara, who joins her late husband Ralph in the Hall of Fame, was celebrated as a businesswoman, accountant, philanthropist, and champion of communities of color.

Congratulations, Barbara!



## Mark Your Calendar

From June 1-15 Papitto Opportunity Connection will be accepting grant proposals for consideration from recognized non-profit 501(c) (3) organizations in Rhode Island. These proposals must focus on unique programming in the areas of **education, job skills training and entrepreneurship** that will create opportunities and lead to success for Rhode Island's Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities.

Often, grantees ask if they can submit a second proposal after receiving funding. To ensure we are able to reach as many organizations as possible, we limit funding requests to once a year. For example, If you applied in December, then you may apply again in December of the following year. If you received a commitment for a multi-year grant, a second year of funding is not automatic, and will only be considered after we receive a report regarding your first year of activities. If you have a multi-year grant, POC will not consider another grant until the multi-year grant is completed.

Only applications received through our website will be considered. Click [here](#) to learn more.



POC Advisory Board Members, Marcy Reyes, Dr. Saima Chaudhry, and Ting Barnard

### **Women's Fund of RI accepting applications for Women's Policy Institute's leadership training program.**

The Women's Policy Institute (WPI) is a professional development and leadership program designed to develop policy, advocacy and strategic communications skills among women who are interested in influencing the policymaking process. Each year from September through June, WPI holds training across the state of Rhode Island in how to draft legislation and advocate for policies that will help make our state an equitable place to live for women and girls.

Applications for WPI's 2023-24 cohort are now being accepted through June 9, 2023. Click [here](#) to apply.

