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CITY'S TOUGHEST SCHOOLS DEBATE THEIR WAY TO THE TOP

NEW YORK – In a time of aggressive budget cuts and concerns about the capacity of public education, a group of youngsters from New York City demonstrated their resilience and their academic talents. In a dramatic display of ability, debate teams from New York City public schools took every single top honor at the New York State Catholic Forensics League (CFL) Championships held in Albany this past weekend.

Amber Joseph and Jael McGreal from the Institute of Collaborative Education won the novice state championship in their first year of debate. Debate partners Bruke Abenet and Marquis Harrison, both seniors at the Manhattan Center for Science and Mathematics in East Harlem, secured 1st place in the varsity division. Harrison was also named the top speaker in the entire state.

All of these students compete in a program run by the IMPACT Coalition called the New York Urban Debate League (NYUDL). The NYUDL is the flagship program of the IMPACT Coalition, with 45 city high schools participating in this policy debate program. The IMPACT (Improving Mentor Practices and Communication Techniques) Coalition is a nonprofit, career development organization that enhances the educational and career opportunities of urban students through training in debate and workplace dynamics. IMPACT makes competitive debate accessible to students and provides advocacy training to local community-based organizations.

qualified for the highly competitive national championships, where they will step up to the plate against top debaters in the country this May. These students will be representing New York when they present their arguments on the year's debate topic – whether the United States Federal Government should pass a policy to limit the use of weapons of mass destruction. The championships, to be held in Pittsburgh, PA will feature over 100 of the best teams in the nation.

Other local teams that qualified are Tiffany Ward and Davina Anderson, also from the School of Legal Studies; cousins Andre and Davaria Providence from the High School for Enterprise, Business & Technology in Brooklyn; Gary Scott and Danielle Alvarez from Franklin K. Lane High School in Queens (Lane is also sending one of only two teams from New York to compete in the prestigious National Forensics League championships); Shana Bryce and Chastiry Torres from Cobble Hill School of American Studies in Brooklyn; and Raphael Garner and Jeffrey Wilson from Freedom Academy in Brooklyn.

The NYUDL was established in 1997 in partnership with Emory University and the Open Society Institute (OSI), a private operating and grant making foundation created by billionaire George Soros to promote the development of open society around the world by encouraging debate as an advocacy tool to strengthen the capacity of marginalized groups. During this difficult time of massive budget cuts within the Board of Education, funding has played a critical role in keeping essential after-school programs such as the NYUDL alive.

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*IMPACT stands for Improving Mentor Practices and Communication Techniques.
IMPACT is a 501c3 career development organization holding keys to our success.*